Metalsmith

Spring 1994
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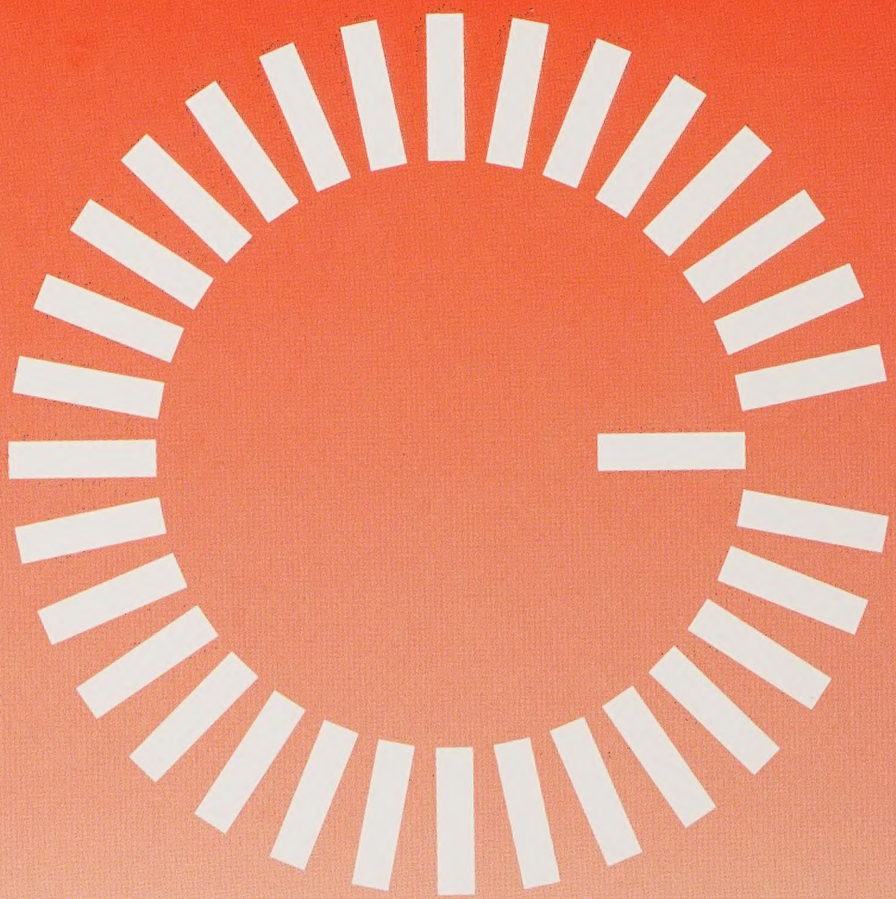

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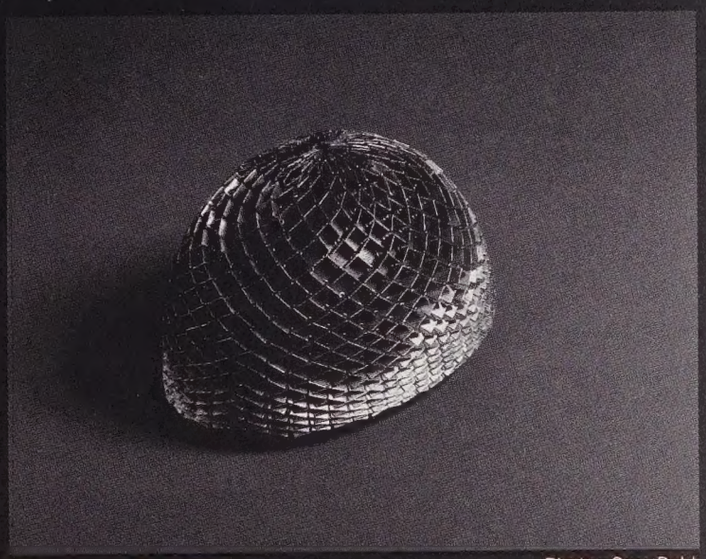

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Editorial

Every issue of *Metalsmith* offers new challenges, ideas, critical approaches and more than its share of logistical problems and snafus for me. And try as I might to envision each issue, when the final product arrives in my mail box I am always excited and elated. I regret that I frequently receive the published edition of *Metalsmith* just as I am in the middle of a deadline for the next issue. Often I can only sit down with the magazine long after many of our readers have already dog eared their copy and called me to praise and/or condemn its contents.

Many times the magazines you will read have articles which were contracted for months in advance, and the images and proofs have passed through my hands so many times that I feel as if I could recite their contents verbatim. With this issue, however, I was surprised because for some reason more readers than usual took the time to sit down and write some of their thoughts and concerns to the Editor. It is not rare to receive letters complimenting a particular feature or spread; nor is it uncommon to receive lines of complaint about a review of a particular artist or exhibition. But these last few months have been different. I received numerous long, articulate missives which dealt less with the specifics of the magazine and more with the issues that confront all of us interested in metalsmithing.

The writers (as you will see) wrote passionately and intelligently about the field. They ask questions and toss out challenges to their peers with an intensity often unmatched by professional writers.

It is exciting for me to believe that this magazine is a catalyst and a clearing house for such dynamic opinions. It is a pleasure to know that not only is the magazine looked at, but that the ideas and information contained herein lead an active life in studios, classrooms, galleries, and craft shows. In many ways the challenge that Kathleen Browne offers in "The Future Perfect: Activism and Advocacy" is already being acted upon by many readers of this magazine. Often many artists have been encouraged and encourage one another, to "shut up and just work" and, of course, work *is* essential. But it is also important to speak up, to protest, and argue with conviction and fairness, and to celebrate and praise with generosity, magnanimity and intelligent and thoughtful standards for that praise. More so than many magazines, *Metalsmith* does not appeal so much to the consumers of a product as it addresses the producers. And whether that product is a fine brooch, a sculptural form in patinaed copper, or a scholarly historical appraisal of a metalsmith or metalworking technique, it is we, the producers, who must map our past and direct our future.

— F.C.L.

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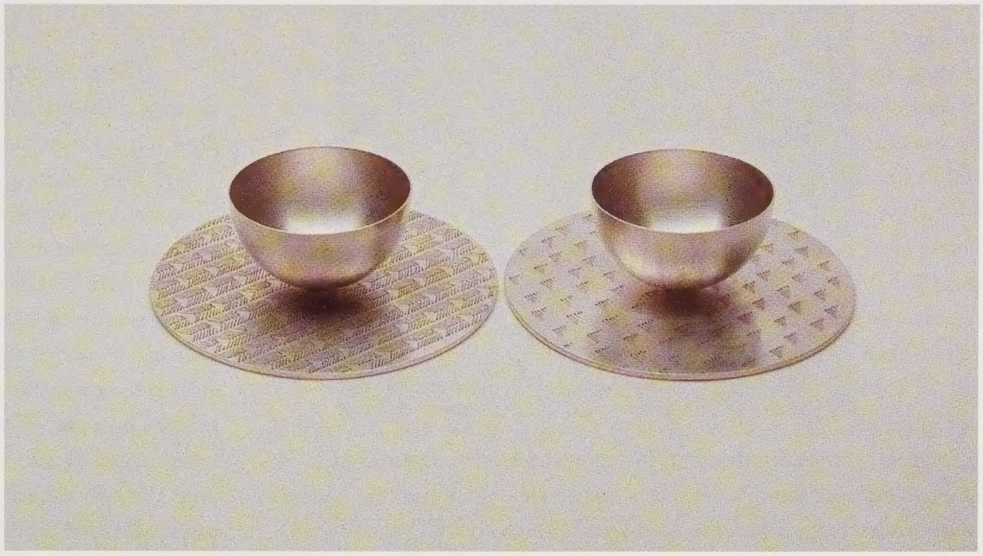

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Photograph by Johannes Kuhnen
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Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles
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Letters

Dear Editor,

Attending the Chicago New Art Forms Show this October I was interested, but ultimately disappointed in what appeared to be an attempt by some contemporary Metals artists to define a critical platform. This would be a useful place to recognize the wrestle over critical and conceptual issues being raised by some work in Metals – this heterogeneous, extended family of craft. A panel discussion including Kate Wagle, Frank Lewis, Paulette Werger, and moderated by Kathleen Brown seemed to fail at the onset by pitching the speakers against the term "quality" which all felt necessary to qualify from the start. This term, already bearing the weight of modernist aesthetics and current marketing may not have been a good selection to initiate concise dialogue on the issue of defining a language for criticism. Although the context for this presentation, the fanned peacock tail of craft shows, may have done more than the term "quality" to confuse and muffle what I perceived to be the issue. The issue, forging a language which will allow us to recognize our ties and differences as craftspeople, to reclaim our historical and contemporary relevance in culture, to exercise a critical program for the work which warrants it, and hopefully to define different formal and conceptual positions in the craft fields.

After the muddled presentation, I experienced the result of the lack of such a support structure. The written text by Bruce W. Pepich for the show, "Ten American Jewelers" at Perimeter Gallery in Chicago is an easy example of the tolerated if not culled irreverence of work in our field.

The show, "Ten American Jewelers", included the likes of Bruce Metcalf, Sandra Enterline, Eleanor Moty, Didi Suydam. Some of the more notable and credited artists in our field. The work in the show utilized familiar if not traditional methods and means of ornamenting the body and mostly traditional if not anticipated materials of the late twentieth century. Unsurprisingly the text approached this work not through the history, utility, materials, or forms within jewelry; but through a superficial appropriation of the history and discourse of painting and sculpture complete with an apparent ignorance of the historical function of jewelry; and I quote, "once considered solely for purposes of adornment, jewelry now makes statements about design or creates narrative messages". Other examples: "Today's artist-made jewelry deals with a number of issues. Some artists treat their jewelry as small-scale sculptures or pieces of architecture", "Jewelers may choose to deal with line, color and form as do their counterparts in painting".

Mr. Pepich goes on to match jewelers with specific painters or sculptors whom they most expertly and diminutively [sic] appropriate. In speaking of Didi Suydam: "her silver surfaces are burnished and brushed in a way that suggest a miniture [sic] version of David Smith's steel pieces"; or of David Damkoehler "...these pieces can be read as elaborate line drawings suggesting the works of Saul Steinberg and the automatic drawing of the 20th century surrealists"; or Sandra Enterline, "While some of the her pieces suggest the balancing acts of Alexander Calder's witty and elegant wire sculptures, other project a massive presence beyond their actual size. These works echo the absolute forms of minimalist sculpture, effective far beyond their scale".

The crux of the writing is that these jewelers are excellent at creating mini-fine art which "...could be effective in any interior or outdoor setting if increased ten-fold in size".

This is deeply disturbing. This work is not painting and sculpture. It becomes conservative, hyper-crafted, and critically deaf-mute in the face of contemporary painting and sculpture and the philosophical, critical, and political support structure of such art. Our work needn't be disemboweled by a language and history which cannot hope to be responsible for its inherent meaning and value; formally, materially, culturally. Why must we waste this value of our work, our real-scale work, by tossing pebbles into the schism of painting and sculpture? Why isn't this work related to the wealth of the history of jewelry or other decorative arts? Why must Didi Suydam's technique be related to David Smith's which was gleaned from fabrication within our field and industry long before it was incorporated into the language of sculpture? Why would the lines of a Damkoehler brooch be compared to automatic drawings before being held up to the lines of our bodies?

The text was written by Mr. Pepich, Director of Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. He knows art, he writes of it. We sell this work by associating it with prestige and political power of fine art. I understand the equation: convince the uniformed that they're not sinking their money in jewelry but are buying second class art and you may have a sale. But how long can we believe that this offers us any present, future, or genuine potential as makers? How long can we undermine the inherent value of what we do in order to operate within a more privileged but meaningless context? Where does the responsibility lie? Is it our responsibility as makers to assure that we show our work in spaces and with support structures which can accommodate the specific and culturally relevant meanings of our work? Do we as a field expect our more noted members to be conscious of how there [sic] work is represented? And if, as one of my more cynical friends mentioned, perhaps this *is* the way these artists would have their work represented, then I challenge them to participate in the fields they are supposedly addressing.

On the question of language: where do we begin to act responsibly and find a way to address our work? I don't have directions on how to achieve this, but in practice I have to try something. I believe that it is unnecessary to fuse meaning to our work. I believe that we have access to the same rich veins of human drama be they philosophic, historic, political, economic, or social as any other art form. Moreover I believe that these issues may be gleaned from, rather than adhered to the forms and function of the objects we make. It is in this narrow but deep crevice of human history, that of using and embellishing our lives, that I've invested. I believe that by considering where our work crosses-in the utilitarian, the sensual, the physical, the material, the personal, the decorative; we can begin to formulate a language which can be more responsible to our needs, history, and function in contemporary society that the borrowed but ill-suited [sic] garments of painting and sculpture. I believe this shift is entirely possible but rests on the intentions of artists working in our field. That I question.

— Kim Cridler

LETTERS CONTINUE ON PAGE 10

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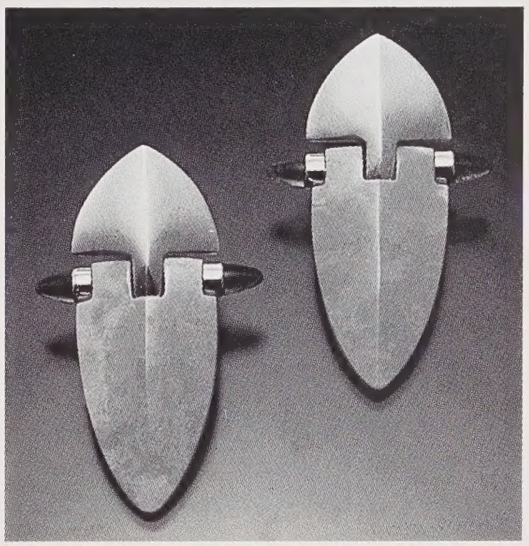

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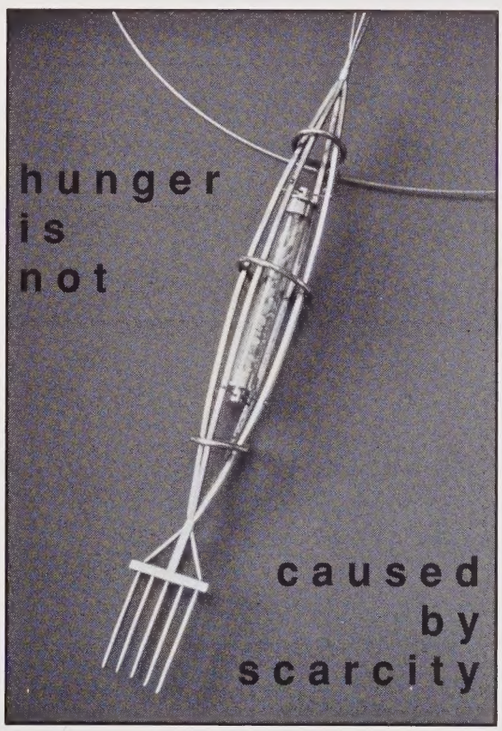

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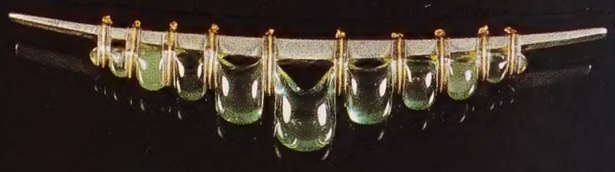

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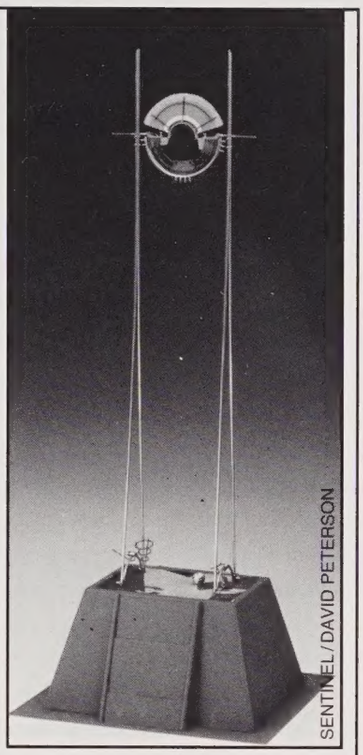
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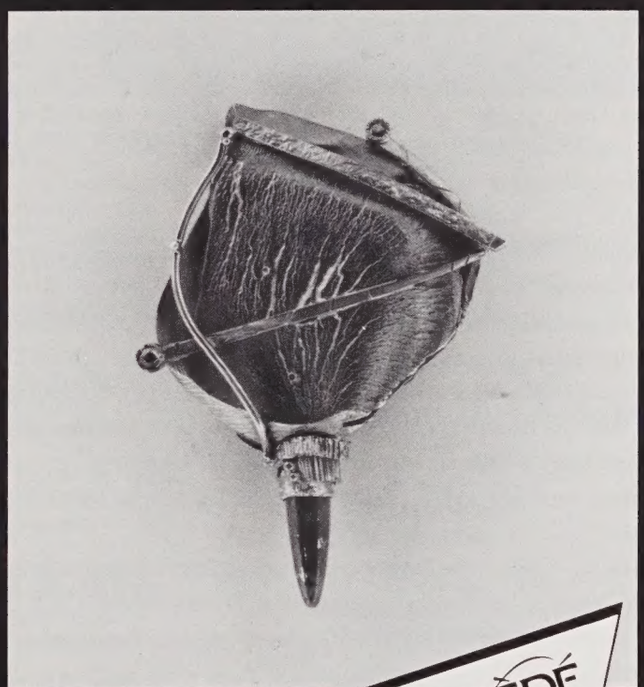

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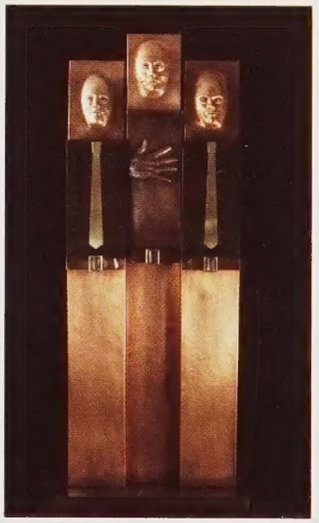

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LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Dear Editor,

Well, [at this writing] it's already the middle of August, and I've finally been able to distill my feelings of frustration with SNAG into what I hope is some constructive criticism. I usually assume that someone else will write when something goes wrong [or right], but this time, I felt that it was very important for me to write and voice my frustration with both the conference and the *Sculptural Concerns* exhibition and catalog. [Editor's Note: *Sculptural Concerns* opened at the Cincinnati Center for the Arts during the 1993 SNAG convention.] I think it's pretty obvious that the problems we've seen with the way that show was organized, and the unforgivable way in which the catalog was done [the quintessential example of a Macintosh gone bad!] are symptomatic of the basic identity problem we have as a field. Because we are unsure of who we are ourselves, we continue to allow ourselves to be represented as "art-world-wannabes" by gallery owners, curators and designers who are "art-world-wannabes" themselves. I think that by 'elevating' our activity to sculpture-making, Bob Schroeder did us a great disservice, and, to me, that show did not present a pro-metalsmithing position. In Schroeder's catalog essay, he mentions a roundtable discussion he had with Jeannine Falino and four "representative artists" involved in the exhibition where they discussed topics like "personal definitions of sculpture" and "individual memories." These two topics are representative of our two big problems: one, that we continue to define our work and activity as metalsmiths as either art or not-art, and two, the discussion of our activity as makers solely in terms of personal feelings or experiences. We have been functioning as a field on the belief that the definition of art is within the beholder, that it is impossible to define what is and is not art, and that since we make meaningful objects, they must be art.

I think that to continually talk about our work as metalsmiths from a personal, individual point of view is keeping us from getting down and dirty to seriously discuss what it is that makes us metalsmiths, what we have in common as makers, and why ours is a different activity than art. I came away from SNAG with tremendous frustration, having witnessed standing ovations for people like William Harper, and a seemingly blind acceptance of the positions of people like Philip Fike, Mary Lee Hu and Leslie Leupp. But again, because we have limited our discussions of the definitions of metalsmithing, jewelry and art to personal interpretations, it is inappropriate to question the authority of these individual positions. Any critique of the positions of people in our field, as long as we keep up this "what metalsmithing means to me" mentality, are absolutely not invited, not welcome. It's important to make sure that our support of our peers does not continue to impede discourse.

Our position thus far has been one of live and let live: there's room in this field for everyone. Until recently, I brushed off the craft-as-art positioning that goes on so frequently in our community as benign, as activity that could exist alongside the very positive pro-metalsmithing work that's going on now with people like Myra Mimlitsch Gray, Lisa Norton, etc. But, here's the thing: just as you can't make a sexist curriculum non-biased by adding a class on feminism on the side, we can't make metalsmithing strong and positive as an activity and still allow this destructive art-positioning [which only serves to support a hierarchically vertical relationship between art and craft] to go unquestioned.

The opinions that a good part of the SNAG membership share, as evidenced by the standing ovation that William Harper received, and the fact that he and Jocelyne Gobeil were invited to speak at a conference entitled "A New Metals Order," are not only 'behind the times' in their placement of jewelry within an activity our culture calls art, *they are actively destructive* to our field. In other words, the seemingly constant activity of "elevating" of our work as metalsmiths to art, in search of respect and credibility is not a benign activity: in so doing we negate our positive distinct role as makers within our culture.

Perhaps the root of this problem is, as I mentioned above, that we continually allow for discussion of art in the context of the individual; that is, that we discuss personal ideas of what art is and what it means to us individually to be an art maker, as if it were possible to exist autonomously outside of culture. What we don't do as a field is look at art, jewelry-making, metalsmithing [and everything else for that matter] as constructions of culture, constructions that have been put into place over time and are constantly changing: we tend to blindly accept the definitions of art and jewelry, etc., as 'givens' or 'facts of life.' We haven't, until recently, questioned what art is as an activity in the cultural context: what our culture has constructed as the activity we call art and how our work is different than that, how our work is understood or defined by the culture. It seems to me that that's where the problem lies. If we don't study art-making activity on a cultural level, we won't ever be able to name our own object-making activity as anything but art or not-art.

In our field, there is a critical mass committed to celebrating our object-making activity, defining their roles as makers within a community. These makers are conscious of the cultural conditions that they work in, and have chosen metalsmithing as way to make meaning within that culture. They are sensitive to the ways in which crafted objects can influence the continuous cultural construction and redefinition process. If we can begin to understand our work in this context, we can see that our position as makers is a positive, empowered one, and one that we must take responsibility for [I'm thinking of those people who can't or refuse to see how their work can be destructive when injected into the culture].

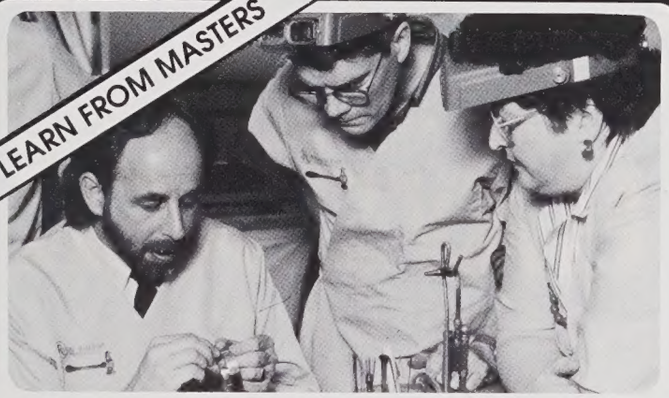
It's time now to stop defining metalsmithing as art or as not-art, and celebrate it for what it is. This is a great time to be a metalsmith: our position as makers is rooted within the community, within the culture; and with that grounding, our objects resonate as both a reflection of the culture within which they were made, and as tools for redefining that culture. That's very different from the myth of the artist-outsider. For our own good, we must stop looking to Modernism, the artist as hero/outsider and the autonomous object for the rules by which we measure our work.

I am glad to see *Metalsmith* moving in this direction in support of this kind of positive constructive discourse. Off the top of my head, I can imagine a discussion with makers like Gary Griffin, Jan Brooks Lloyd, Lisa Norton, Myra Mimlitsch Gray and sculptors like Heather McGill and Ann Hamilton [I suggest these two sculptors because of their interest in material, and the association [by critics] of their work with craft: what art-critic Mary Jane Jacobs has called "the trickle up theory"] about the distinctions between craft-making vs. sculpture making as cultural constructions.

I know that some SNAG members are not so interested in reading about theory, perhaps because they don't see it as being important to their daily work reality. But as Einstein said, the theory precedes the reality; that is, the theory defines the questions we ask of ourselves, and the goals we set for ourselves. I think it's important for *Metalsmith* to continue to work on recognizing the critical mass that's forming within the membership. As for me, I'm concerned with finding ways to communicate these ideas without being threatening: this stuff should be helpful and expansive, and at the very least, interesting! It's so important to keep the doors open to discourse.

— Erika Ayala Stefanutti

LETTERS CONTINUE ON PAGE 43



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FORGING MODERNIST

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, & shall be with us forever

race be with you, mercy, & peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote

FIGURE 1
The Second Epistle of John, 1901
Limited edition of 15;
printed and retailed by Joseph Moore Bowles
bound paper, aqueous paints, 4¾ x 3¾"
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory
of their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
Acc. no. 81.785

The Metalwork and Jewelry of **Janet Payne Bowles**

Text: W. Scott Braznell

"The only work that counts," she added with her quick smile, "is, of course, that which affords the opportunity for complete and satisfying self-expression." Such was the record of one interviewer of Janet Payne Bowles recalling her early days in Boston still searching for "the work in which I could put all my energy and enthusiasm."[1] Payne Bowles's lifelong artistic and intellectual quest took her from an initial interest in music to writing, psychology, and handicrafts. When she married and left her Indianapolis home in 1895 she quickly connected with the nation's leading circles of progressive art and thought, first in Boston and, from 1902 to 1912, in New York. It was not until approaching middle age, however, when she separated from her husband and returned to Indianapolis that she found *her opportunity* and then embarked on an important and successful career that united the pursuit and practice of art, ideas, metalwork and jewelry with teaching about them. Nearly all of Payne Bowles's surviving work was inherited by her children who donated it to the Indianapolis Museum of Arts between 1968 and 1981. Remarkable, courageous, and wholly original, her legacy bridges the Arts and Crafts movement's interest in revitalizing culture through reforms in taste, design, and production methods and the modern art movement's preoccupation with spirituality and the forceful expression of inner feeling and emotion.[2]

Payne Bowles's first known art work was illuminating initials designed by Bruce Rogers for R. B. Gruelle's, *Notes: Critical & Biographical*, a book about the paintings owned by William T. Walters, (father of the founder of Baltimore's Walters Art Gallery, Henry Walters,) which was printed in 1895 by Joseph Moore Bowles, then well-known as the publisher of the lavish arts periodical *Modern Art* and who also was wed to Payne Bowles the same year. The earliest Payne Bowles works to survive are illuminations in four copies of *The Second Epistle of John* published by her husband in 1901. The configuration of scroll interlacing and animal forms in Payne Bowles's illuminations (Fig. 1) were in the then current Celtic revival style and carry on the spirit of pages decorated by Bruce Rogers who had been working with Joseph Bowles from about 1890. The flat-patterned interweaving, the tendril and vermicular shapes with knob ends, the contrast of solids and voids, and the wide-eyed creatures in these illuminations reappeared later in Payne Bowles's early jewelry (Fig. 2). Payne Bowles continued making illuminations for her husband until at least 1910, but by then she was giving most of her time to making jewelry.

With the acquisition of *Modern Art* by the Boston lithographers Louis Prang & Company in 1895, the Bowleses began married life in Boston where Joseph Bowles carried on as editor of the magazine and to which Payne Bowles was an occasional contributor of book reviews. The young couple became active participants in local arts events. Joseph Bowles exhibited at Boston's historic April 1897 arts and crafts exhibition, an exhibition that led to the establishment of the city's Society of Arts and Crafts the same year.[3] Upon becoming a member of the Society of Arts and Crafts, he was a lender to its 1899 exhibition which displayed not only copies of *Modern Art* and Payne Bowles's illuminations for Gruelle's *Notes*, but other books including the landmark first edition of Arthur Wesley Dow's *Composition*. Both this manual and its author would exert a strong influence on the artistic maturation of Payne Bowles.

Payne Bowles was also a lender to the 1899 exhibition with "metal ornaments" made by Chicago metalsmith and jeweler Mary Elaine Hussey. Scant information exists on Hussey and no examples of her work are known, but she may have engendered Payne Bowles's initial interest in making metalwares and jewelry. The catalogue for the inaugural *Housewarming Exhibition of Articles in Gold and Silver* held in October 1899 at the National Arts Club in New York City stated that Hussey contributed a cast and chased silver belt buckle and cast and chased silver garter clasps with and without jewels. Bowles's earliest known jewelry efforts were also cast.

All photographs courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art

While Payne Bowles was being stimulated by Boston's emerging arts and crafts movement she was also being awakened intellectually by the lectures in psychology and philosophy she attended given by William James at Radcliffe College. It was on a respite from these classes that she evidently first learned metalsmithing in 1900 or 1901. Over the years she reminisced about her chance acquaintance with a Russian youth making metalwares by hand in a small shop on Boston's waterfront and the agreement the two made to exchange instruction in metalsmithing for lessons in psychology. The immigrant craftsman was probably carrying out the kind of vernacular work Boston's Society of Arts and Crafts was then seeking to revive. In the century's first years, opportunities for learning metalcraft and jewelry outside the factory system were just being introduced; texts for beginning amateurs only became widely available after 1903–4 In a 1942 interview, Payne Bowles recalled her difficulties in acquiring metalcrafting skills: "All skilled craftsmen are jealous of their skills and will not wittingly teach you their secrets."[5]

In 1902 the Bowleses began a decade living in and near New York City where Payne Bowles began her career as a metalsmith and jeweler. Underscoring their commitment to progressive ideas, the couple and their two children made an adventurous move in 1906 to Upton Sinclair's ill-fated socialized living experiment at Helicon Hall. This ended abruptly with a disastrous fire in early 1907 and the loss of Payne Bowles's manuscript for her psychological novel *Gossamer to Steel*.[6] However, when the Bowles family relocated in Manhattan that spring, Payne Bowles set up a jewelry and metal shop for herself where her husband based his newly-founded Forest Press.

Payne Bowles was familiar with the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Published interviews relate her frequent visits there and acquaintance with Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke, the museum's director.[7] In 1908 she evidently had useful guidance from observing the metalcrafter K. Okabe, one of two Japanese craftsmen employed at the museum to clean, repair, and plan for the re-arrangement of the Japanese metal collections.

FIGURE 2
Pendant, circa 1907 – 11
silver, lapis lazuli, enamel, 2½" h.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles
in memory of their
mother, Janet Payne Bowles
Acc. no. 68.21.52

A silver pendant (Fig. 2) is probably one of the earliest surviving examples of Payne Bowles's jewelry. It was cast just as the Bronze age Celtic jewelry it recalls was cast and its design of animal faces overlooking a lapis lazuli heart is comparable to the ornamental patterns and animal faces that appear in Celtic and early Nordic Art. Moreover, it bears out the assessment Joseph Bowles made of his wife's work in a March 1910 letter to Frederic Allen Whiting, secretary of Boston's Society of Arts and Crafts, that it was "the barbaric sort of design in which she works most naturally."[8]

Payne Bowles acquired sufficient knowledge and experience to achieve important recognition by 1910. Maude Adams, then a widely celebrated actress, commissioned her to make jewelry and metal accessories for her role as Rosalind in Shakespeare's "As you Like It." In addition to buckles, chains and other ornaments the elaborate ensemble included a curtle ax and a spear and was reported to be made of silver set with green onyx stones. Period illustrations reveal the Celtic and Roman influence on Payne Bowles's design and one account noted "the jewelry which Mrs. Bowles designed is ...elaborate in detail, yet simple in homogeneous effect."[9]

Also in 1910, Frederic Allen Whiting, published Payne Bowles's article "A Situation in Craft Jewelry" in the Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston's journal, *Handicraft*, and it appeared soon thereafter in the *Jewelers' Circular Weekly*. In the essay, Payne Bowles admonished amateurs and cautioned successful professionals on the pitfalls found when competing with commercial jewelry. She also urged craft jewelers to pursue a thorough familiarity with materials and techniques with this advice:

> "The knowledge of the chemistry and geology of his material will give him as much psychic power in work as a great sensitive knowledge of design. Its wide knowledge gives him imaginative fuel, and he finds himself trying to produce effects etherially conceived. This is the spiritual process of enlarging the limitations of his craft."[10]

Reviews of the 1910 annual exhibition of the National Society of Craftsmen (New York) gave favorable mention to Payne Bowles's work, and in the *International Studio*, J. William Fosdick commented on her carved silver cross set with a cat's eye, observing that her work was "Celtic in spirit" and "carried out in a broad, free spirit which is most commendable."[11] Greco-Roman influences are also apparent in Payne Bowles's jewelry especially pendant chains whose links duplicate Roman examples. In addition to pendant crosses (Fig. 2), examples with Christian symbols include a silver spoon that displays the crucifixion of Christ (Fig. 3 top, far right) and a silver and gold ring with the "Chi-Rho" monogram.[12]

By 1912 Payne Bowles had found the crafts of metal as the world in which she would operate as an artist. When she returned to Indianapolis that Spring she was met with interest and acclaim for her achievements as a metalsmith and jeweler. In October 1912, the *Indianapolis News* reported that she would conduct classes in metalwork at the John Herron Art Institute (now called the Indianapolis Museum of Art). The same month, the *Shortridge Daily Echo* reported that Payne Bowles was contemplating teaching an advanced course in art metal. By February 1913 the class had been formed; and in December 1913 the Indianapolis press reported that Payne Bowles was at work on a set of spoons commissioned by the J. Pierpont Morgan estate.[13]

Through her relationship with Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke in New York, Payne Bowles had been introduced to J. Pierpont Morgan, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Morgan, who was an avid collector of ancient jewelry and metalwares, doubtless had some understanding with Payne Bowles that motivated her to commence work for him, and following his death in March 1913, to continue this work for his estate and heirs. Although the Indianapolis press reported Payne Bowles's progress on this work, correspondence, invoices, or other confirming evidence for this commission are unknown.[14] The gold and jewel-inlaid spoons for Morgan mentioned in the Indianapolis press between 1913 and 1920 presumably correspond to those illustrated in a 1924 profile on Payne Bowles in the *International Studio*, where they were captioned "Gold Spoons Made For J. Pierpont Morgan" (Fig. 3).[15] Close study reveals that all but two of the spoons illustrated in the article survive in the Indianapolis Museum of Art's collection: but they are made of silver and although the ring terminal of one spoon (Fig. 3 bottom, fourth from left) may have originally held a jewel, none is embellished with jewels.

Most of the spoons published in the 1924 profile as having been made for Morgan were probably completed by 1915. In addition to Christian symbols (Fig. 3 top, far right) some of the spoons illustrate Payne Bowles's practice of invoking a mood of spirituality with avian and zoomorphic forms; one spoon has a handle that incorporates what appears to be a figure peering from a window topped by a rooster and a bowl joined to the handle by a head and arms. (Fig. 3 top, third from left). Silhouette is dominant in several spoons (Fig. 3 top, far left; bottom, second from right) and provides the background for an intricate overlay of soldered and fused elements that exhibit the complexity and mystery of the earlier cast zoomorphic motifs. The curls, beads, and snips on one spoon (Fig.3 bottom, far left), although built up out of molten globs and drips and fused snips and wires rather than being cast, correspond to Payne Bowles's earlier interlaced and vermicular work. However, where Payne Bowles previously constructed form out of interlaced vermiform elements, here she composed in a sequential, additive process that induced what she termed "the creative flow."[16] In a manner typical of her later work, her fabrication methods are a visible part of her expression.

FIGURE 3
Janet Payne Bowles,
Spoons, mostly by 1915
silver
Photo: from *International Studio*,
Oct. 1924
Indianapolis Museum of Art

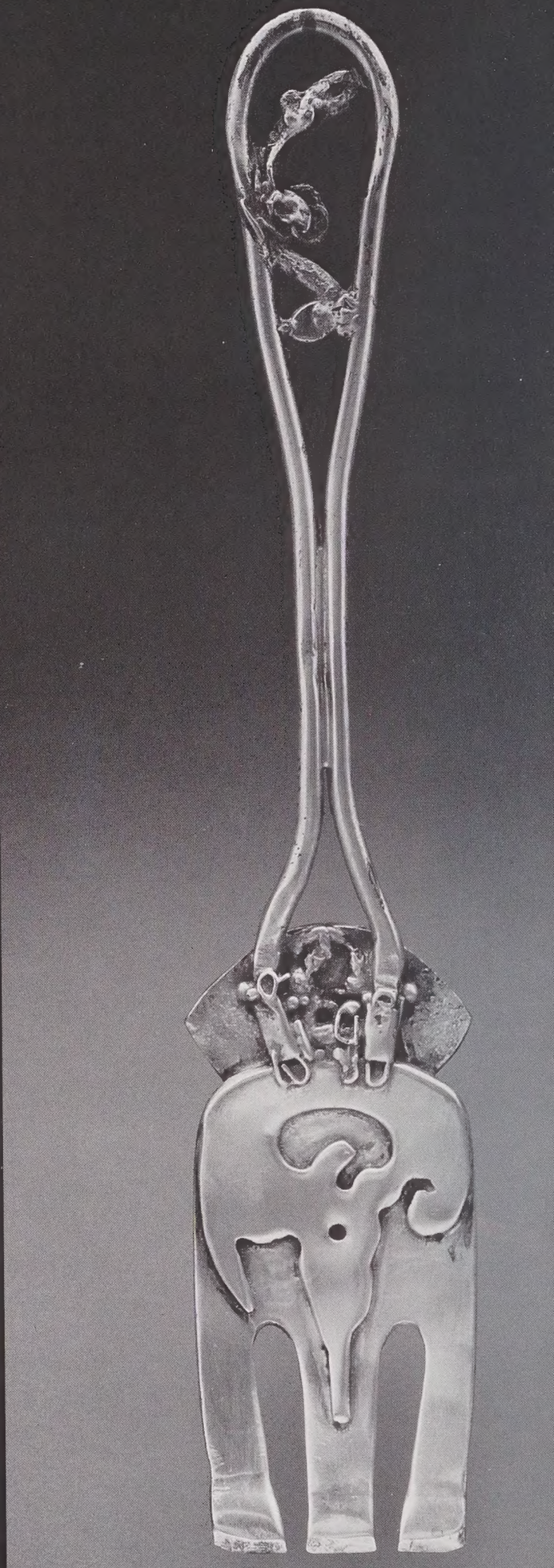
A lead box (Fig.4, next page), one of the three surviving metal works signed by Payne Bowles, may be the box which earned her a bronze medal at the Panama-Pacific exhibition of 1915.[17] Although its irregular surface of drips and blobs of molten lead is vaguely brain-like and recalls the zoomorphic creatures in Payne Bowles's earlier work, it is not dependent on representative images; subject matter has been dismissed. More abstract forms served her growing interest in exploring self-expression unrestricted by conventionalization and the constraints of traditional metalsmithing practices.

FIGURE 4, BELOW
Box, circa 1913
lead, glass, 2 x 3 x 2½″
Marks: JANET - PAYNE - BOWLES
(within a circle)

Indianapolis Museum of Art
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory
of their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
acc. no. 68.21.9

FIGURE 5, RIGHT
Chalice or *salt stand*, circa 1925-30
silver, 8″ h.
Indianapolis Museum of Art

Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory
of their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
acc. no. 68.21.6



By the late 1910s Payne Bowles began to experiment aggressively with twisted wire. The interlacing seen in her earlier work breaks out into muscular, sinewy forms with a new, three dimensional interest in spatial perception and a wider range of interrelated fabrication processes. In rings twisted wire became a major part of her technique (Fig. 6); in one example a jewel was not so much part of a setting as it was "chained" in place.[18] Wire intertwined to form hair pins is virtually alive with her creative energy. New materials were also part of her exploration and in the early 1920s Payne Bowles was experimenting with "cupror" a new tarnish-resistant and ductile goldlike alloy introduced in 1910 that combined copper and nickel. Three rings survive from the seven Payne Bowles listed in a 1931 inventory as including cupra [sic], but it has not been possible to verify that these rings contain this alloy.[19]

Works by the Danish silversmith Georg Jensen sparked a surge of artistic development in Payne Bowles and a body of her metalwork evinces her awareness of his designs. The open handle of a serving fork (Fig. 7) is one of several examples that recall the "Blossom" pattern flatware Jensen introduced in 1919 and which Payne Bowles may have seen at the Art Institute of Chicago's Jensen exhibition in January 1921. Payne Bowles's Jensenesque flatware marks a significant compositional change in her work, and her pieces begin to interact with space. In the 1920s, Jensen silver was exhibited and promoted in the East and mid-west where Payne Bowles could have seen it: in May 1925, an exhibition of over one hundred pieces of Jensen's silver was on view at the John Herron Art Institute.

By 1921 Bowles was probably making pedestal bowls and cups. Her continuing debt to Jensen is seen in a chalice or salt stand (Fig. 5). Its spirited, whirling columnar stem and sense of movement were undoubtedly inspired by Jensen's designs, particularly his well-known spiral-stem pedestal bowl with pendant grape clusters introduced in 1918. But, if Payne Bowles appropriated Jensen's devices, she rendered them with a vigor and authority that are distinctly her own. This chalice, as well as two spoons whose handles also display the whirling motif,[20] reflect light and imply movement with an intuitiveness seen in contemporary Futurist works also known to Payne Bowles.

A definitive source of influence on Payne Bowles was the composition method of Arthur Wesley Dow. Although she would have been aware of Dow since her marriage in 1895, Dow's integral role in her artistic approach is not readily apparent until the point at which she combined her work with teaching. Indeed, Dow's text *Composition*, following its first publication by Joseph Bowles in 1899, went on to guide the teaching of several generations of arts teachers: by 1941 it was in its twentieth edition.[21] Dow led the break with academic artistic tradition by approaching art through composition rather than through imitative drawing. He taught that "the many different acts and processes combined in a work of art may be attacked and mastered one by one, and thereby a power gained to handle them unconsciously when they must be used together."[22] Payne Bowles shared Dow's belief in art as an individual activity enhanced by spontaneity. She did not make drawings or preliminary sketches and encouraged her pupils to work in the same way and evolve form as the metal itself suggested.

Payne Bowles was a scholar of all periods of art history and an especially avid observer of vanguard works at exhibitions she regularly attended in New York and other arts centers. She practiced Dow's principle of abstraction intuitively, but her accretion approach may have also been encouraged by the collage art of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso after 1912, and by the Americans Joseph Stella and Arthur Dove during the 1920s. One pendant (Fig. 8), for example, offers a double reading: as a face or as a composition of jeweler's bits and scraps. Her visceral engagement with her materials was a working approach that paralleled the vanguard "direct carving" sculptors Robert Laurent and William Zorach. Payne Bowles may have seen their decorative wood sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago annual arts and crafts exhibition of 1924–25. These artists were interested in allowing the material itself to influence the form that took shape under their hands. Direct carving can be viewed as in the spirit of the handicraft revival eschewing the fabrication of designs by others or by machines. An illustration to an article in the *Indianapolis Star* for September 6, 1922, shows her playing the flame from a torch over her work.[23] Soldering, fusing, and molten metal drips are well developed in Payne Bowles's work by 1920. For Payne Bowles her "creative flow" became the flow of molten metals with gravity and other forces of nature her ally.

FIGURE 6, FAR LEFT
Ring, circa 1916-20
silver, 1 1/8" d.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory of their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
acc. no. 68.21.35

FIGURE 7, LEFT
Fork, circa 1921-24
silver, 7½" l.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory of their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
acc. no. 68.21.115

FIGURE 8
Pendant, circa 1916-23
gold wash, baroque pearl, copper, 3″
Indianapolis Museum of Art

Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory of
their mother, Janet Payne Bowles
acc. no. 68.21.95

Notes

1. For this quotation and the characterization of Payne Bowles as a "forging modernist," see Florenz K. Buschmann, "Janet Payne Bowles Knows Art of Changing Metals into Beauty," *Indianapolis Star* (April 20, 1930), II, p. 18. For additional references and material this essay draws upon, see W. Scott Braznell, "The Metalwork and Jewelry of Janet Payne Bowles," in Barry Shifman, with contributions by W. Scott Braznell and Sharon S. Darling, *The Arts and Crafts Metalwork of Janet Payne Bowles*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1993. Hereafter cited as *Payne Bowles*.
2. For Payne Bowles's work in an Arts and Crafts movement context see W. Scott Braznell's entries in Wendy Kaplan, ed. *"The Art That is Life": The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1897 – 1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987).
3. The winter 1897 edition of *Modern Art* included Joseph Bowles's review of the exhibition.
4. W. Scott Braznell, "Metalsmithing and Jewelrymaking, 1900 – 1920." in Janet Kardon, ed., *The Ideal Home 1900 – 1920: The History of Twentieth-century Craft in America*. New York; Harry N. Abrams, Inc. in association with the American Craft Museum, 1993, pp. 55 – 63.
5. Lotys Benning Stewart, "They Achieve, Minds and Hands of Indianapolis Women at Work for Others." *The Indianapolis Star*, Mar. 29, 1929, part 4, p. 14.
6. The manuscript had recently been returned by Doubleday-Page & Company who had accepted it for publication. Years later Payne Bowles rediscovered her notes and reconstructed the novel which was published as a "second edition" by Dunstan & Company of New York in 1917.
7. Rena Tucker Kohlman, "Her Metalcraft Spiritual," *International Studio* 80 (Oct. 1924), 54 – 57.
8. "Frederic Allen Whiting Papers," Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C., roll 429, frame 655.

In late 1924, Payne Bowles received important acclaim as an artist and a metalsmith. Illustrations of Payne Bowles's work and a comprehensive discussion of her artistic principles are found in the long article devoted to her by Indianapolis artist Rena Tucker Kohlman in the *International Studio*. It included Payne Bowles incisive statements: "The universal and the eternal are my favorite and abiding subjects and I am most conscious of a desire to express them in metal." Her intense interest in the spiritual with regard to religious objects was made clear: "In the objects for religious service, I have tried on the decorative side, to reverse the idea of trans-substantiation, to turn a direct symbol back into the mystery of spiritual underflow and express not history's symbol, but the emotion that produces that symbol."[24] In December, Payne Bowles displayed pendants, spoons, and rings in a group exhibition at the Art Center in New York that also included work by such prominent figures as Georg Jensen. Her work was illustrated in the *Bulletin of the Art Center* and received a laudatory review in *Art News* that identified her as "one of the most creative designers working in America today."[25]

Extraordinary progress took place in Payne Bowles's work in the late 1920s. Space became an active component in compositions with the interpenetration of elements and the opposition of solids and voids, and the composition of upright forms. Where a design previously evolved on one plane, it now broke out to rise with explosive liberation into exuberant ritual vessels. A modest-sized ladle, with the simple device of a ring foot on the bowl and a winged terminal on the handle, was made to stand; with its sweeping arched handle it took on a formidable presence.[26] In addition to textural contrast, positive and negative space became part of a figural composition in a serving piece.[27] In one instance, a spatula was made to challenge and delight through the visual play of a figure engraved on the mirrorlike surface of its blade reappearing in three-dimensional form on its handle.[28] Rings, too, evidence a new three dimensional interest and a wider range of interrelated fabrication processes.[29]

Just as Payne Bowles's earlier representative images evolved into abstraction, her functional forms, especially chalices, became sculptural. Chalice (Cover) is an astonishing example of the daring plastic experiments Payne Bowles brought to ritual vessels as complex free-standing forms. Unlike her earlier lead box (Fig. 4) where elements were added to surfaces of a preconceived form, here elements are used to generate the form itself. Combining silver alternately raised, cast, or as bent sheet, extruded wire, molten drips, snips and filings, form is made to interact with space, light, and shadow. But, despite the agitated quality of her forms, Payne Bowles always maintains a clear sense of the elements: sheet, rod, and wire retain their unique character and properties. In this and other chalices, traditionally solid elements such as handles and pedestals are punctured with voids or cavities. Elements wrap, encircle, frame, penetrate, and enclose space. Hollows become important with negative space active in the overall arrangement. Allowing no rest for the eye, the play of light and shadow, moving in, out, and over changes of shape and texture, is constantly agitated and evanescent, but nonetheless it resolves formal harmonies of balance and proportion. The arresting and numinous quality of these chalices is a result of this tension between resolved composition and fractured form and surface.

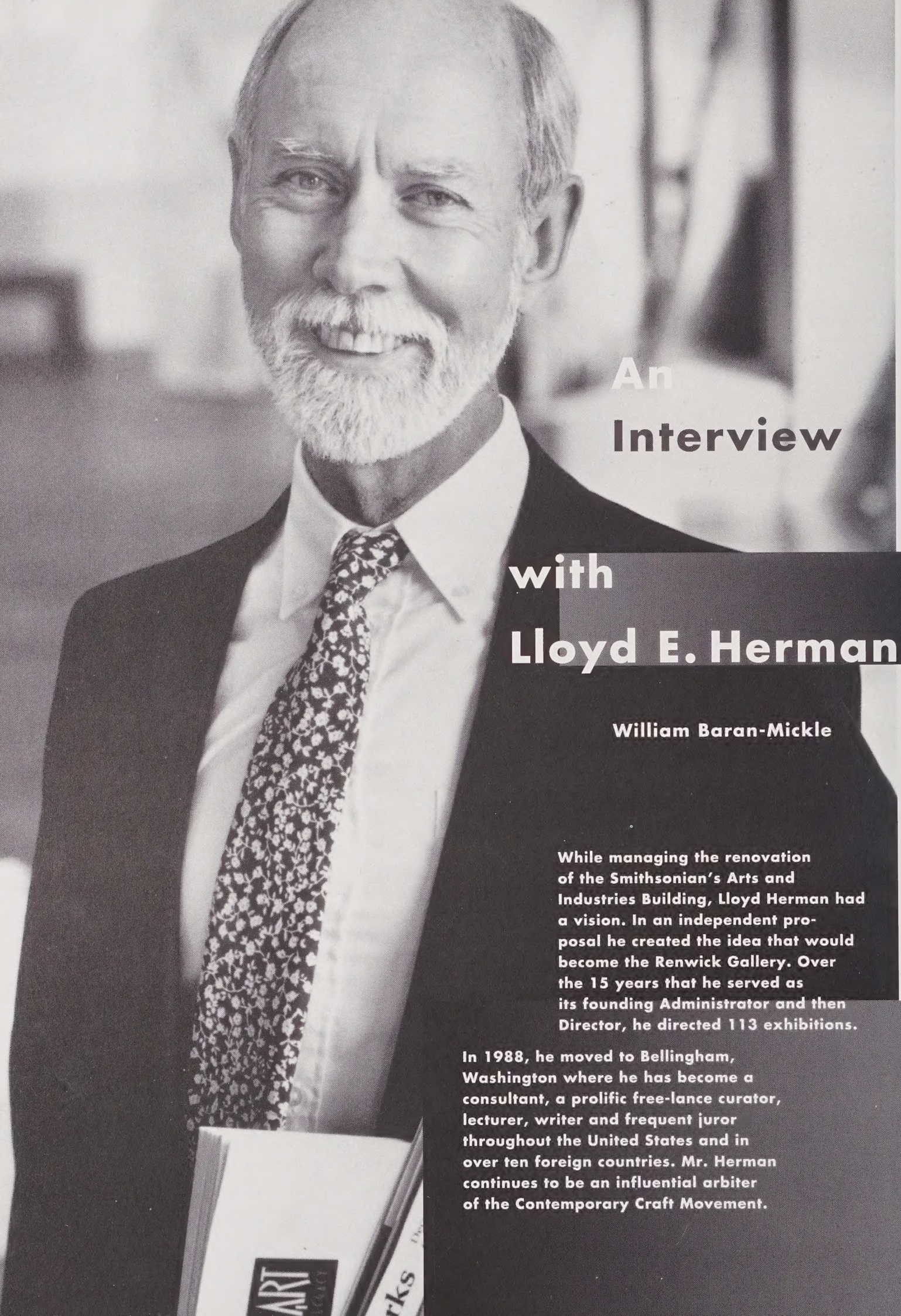
Payne Bowles pushed beyond the Arts & Crafts movements's focus on handicraft as protest against machine production to embrace handicraft as individual artistic expression. Her creative engagement whereby works became explicitly evocative of their materials as well as palpable registers of their maker's physical involvement was an original and pioneering artistic approach. A generation or more passed before this approach was widely considered in the arts.

W. Scott Braznell is an art historian with a speciality in the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century. He presently lives and writes in Hamden, Connecticut.

The metalwork and jewelry illustrated are on view April 9 to May 22 at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in a travelling exhibition called *The Arts & Crafts Metalwork of Janet Payne Bowles*.

Notes

9. See "Maude Adams to Use Weapon," clipping in the Janet Payne Bowles Archives, Indianapolis Museum of Art.
10. Janet Payne Bowles, "A Situation in Craft Jewelry," *Handicraft* 3, no.9 (Dec. 1910), p. 316; reprint in *The Jewelers' Circular Weekly* 62 (Feb., 1, 1911), pp. 109, 111.
11. Fosdick, J. W[illiam]. "The Fourth Annual Exhibition of the National Society of Craftsmen," *International Studio* 42 (Feb. 1911), p. LXXXI.
12. *Payne Bowles*, cat. no. 19.
13. *Shortridge Daily Echo*, Oct. 4, 1912, p. 3; Feb. 13, 1913, p. 1.
14. In 1920 Payne Bowles stated, "He (Clarke) introduced me to Mr. Morgan and for four years I did nothing but pieces for his collection."; see *Indiana Daily Times*, Nov. 29, 1920, p. 9.
15. Kohlman 1924, p. 57.
16. Kohlman 1924, p. 55.
17. *Official Catalogue of Exhibitors, Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco, 1915), p. 74. The document for the award is the Janet Payne Bowles Archives, Indianapolis Museum of Art.
18. *Payne Bowles*, cat. no. 64.
19. See "Neuman's 1931 Inventory" in the Janet Payne Bowles Archives; *Payne Bowles*, cat. nos. 78, 104, 113.
20. *Payne Bowles*, cat. nos. 119, 120.
21. See Cedric C. Moffatt, *Arthur Wesley Dow (1857 – 1922)*. Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1977, p.132.
22. Arthur Wesley Dow, *Composition* (Boston: J. M. Bowles, 1899), p. 3.
23. Guy Brenton, Indianapolis Women Win in Many Lines of Business and Professions." *The Indianapolis Star*, Sept. 6, 1922.
24. Kohlman 1924, p. 54.
25. See Alice M. Sharkey, "Art Center Notes," *Bulletin of the Art Center, New York* 3 (Dec. 1924), p. 93; (Jan. 1925), p. 123. See also "Metal Work by Mrs. Bowles," *Art News* (Jan. 1925), p. 2.
26. *Payne Bowles*, cat. no. 85.
27. *Payne Bowles*, cat. no. 101.
28. *Payne Bowles*, cat. no. 93.
29. *Payne Bowles*, cat. nos.11,12.



An Interview with Lloyd E. Herman

William Baran-Mickle

While managing the renovation of the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building, Lloyd Herman had a vision. In an independent proposal he created the idea that would become the Renwick Gallery. Over the 15 years that he served as its founding Administrator and then Director, he directed 113 exhibitions.

In 1988, he moved to Bellingham, Washington where he has become a consultant, a prolific free-lance curator, lecturer, writer and frequent juror throughout the United States and in over ten foreign countries. Mr. Herman continues to be an influential arbiter of the Contemporary Craft Movement.

W B-M What experiences within the crafts field led to your appointment as the first director of the Renwick Gallery?

L H I really didn't have any specific knowledge of crafts. Rather, I was generally interested in the decorative arts and design, and crafts were part of that. I worked for the Director General of the National Museum at the Smithsonian for five years in an administrative capacity supervising the renovation of the Arts and Industries Building which was to have become the Smithsonian Exposition Hall.

In developing a program of changing exhibitions there, I worked very closely with the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service. We would present exhibitions that were going out on tour, and give them their launching in the Arts and Industries Building. One of the first exhibitions was one that Paul Smith curated called *Plastic as Plastic* for what was then the Museum for Contemporary Crafts. That's when I met first met Paul. He really was, I guess, my earliest craft mentor and continues to be a good friend. He was very helpful to me in the early days of the Renwick.

While my boss was away on a trip, I wrote a proposal for the Renwick Design Center in which I spelled out a program for a changing exhibition space focused on the craft and design field, and the decorative arts. He came back from his trip and didn't acknowledge he'd even seen the memo, and I was too timid to ask. A year later, he did give my proposal to the man who was responsible for developing a program for James Renwick's building. The Assistant Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Robert Tyler Davis. I met with him, but I didn't like any of his ideas.

I was busy working on an exhibition recreating the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition so I didn't give the Renwick a second thought. And then, Mr. Davis had a heart attack and the new Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Joshua Taylor, found my two-year old proposal and liked it. He interviewed me and hired me to organize the Renwick in February of '71. I had the rare opportunity in government to put together basically what I had planned on paper two years before, and see it open in January of 1972. We had just a year to get it all done. That included finishing the interior restoration of the building, furnishing two period rooms and then curating and installing six changing exhibitions that would show the first audience what the gallery was about. So, the first exhibitions really cut across the entire range of craft and design. The introductory exhibition was called *Design Is* and included everything from quilts to rocket nose cones, just to show how design influences every part of our lives.

W B-M In the earliest days of the Gallery, you must have had to explore the field of craft and determine some criteria for focusing the Gallery's energies. How did you go about that task?

L H I guess I think of myself as someone with open eyes and open mind. I'm also interested in what people are making, why they make it and how they sell it. There weren't enough galleries or publications at that time that I could use to get up to speed in the crafts field.

Because the Renwick was new, you would normally have thought it would be difficult to get in the loop. But, because it was part of the Smithsonian I had easy access. I had sort of, well, I won't say I had or the Renwick had immediate respect, but we had immediate attention because it was part of a national museum. It signaled something important was happening.

At that point I'd come into the field without any credentials and simply listened and looked and learned. The early exhibitions did not get a lot of critical scrutiny. Generally the response was very positive and that helped give the Renwick a position in the craft field that very quickly became comparable to that of the American Craft Museum.

I was very interested in having more of our exhibitions travel and in sharing them with other museums that had similar interests. The American Craft Council had focused on crafts people making the unique object, and their whole promotion was that these were art objects. The emphasis was clearly on the more sculptural and expressive objects than functional ones. I felt that we needed to do a national exhibition to show that in addition to what the *Objects USA,* exhibition showed that there was still a great underlying movement within the craft field. My point of view was that the whole base of the crafts field was people making functional objects that were more than one of a kind. The result was the national competition resulting in the *Craft Multiples* exhibiton that toured nationally.

Alan Revere
Earring (Disk Pearl Style)
14k, cultured pearl

I would always try to go to the Rhinebeck Fair. I really did – and still do – try to keep up with not just what's in galleries but what's in craft shops and gift-ware stores and outdoor fairs even below the Rhinebeck quality. Rhinebeck was and ACE fairs continue to be a very important way to find out what people were making. Still today, I discover people in craft fairs whose work interests me and it often ends up leading to a particular kind of exhibition.

In the exhibition I curated in 1981, *Good as Gold: Alternatives Materials in American Jewelry,* at least three of the people in that show I found when I was a juror for one of the Marietta Crafts Nationals. There were several in that show that came out of the Philadelphia Craft Show or other fairs. So, all of those have been important to me in keeping up with the field.

Basically, that was how I selected exhibitions; it was simply my taste. I also freely sought advice from others, and certainly didn't think of myself as an authority on crafts. People have always been generous with their advice and I credited them for helping as much as I could.

W B-M In your opinion, did jewelry and metalsmithing seem to share traits, trends and artistic concerns with their sister crafts?

L H Certainly. Specific qualities that are important to metalsmithing, whether its the gleam of the surface or contrast, or the way that things are joined together are important parts of making. If the connecting link shows it needs to be aesthetically coherent with the overall piece.

People often say you can be a craftsman without being an artist, but you cannot be an artist without being a craftsman. I'm not won over to craftsmanship for its own sake. Craftsmanship just to be showy doesn't really interest me. But neither do I expect craftsmanship to be more refined than is needed for the style or expression the maker intends.

W B-M What were your general views concerning jewelry and metalsmithing while in the Renwick position, and how did you get in touch with what was happening ?

L H Malcolm Lein was Director of the St. Paul Art Museum, now the Minnesota Museum of Art, and had initiated the *Fiber - Clay - Metal* exhibitions. In 1974, he asked the Renwick to co-sponsor *The Goldsmith.* It was a competition that Bill Woolfender, Director of Archives of American Art, Arline Fisch, and I juried. This predated SNAG. That was really my first real exposure to what was going on in contemporary metals. Anyway, I learned a lot jurying that show. Arline and I did jury , a year or so later, the Sterling Silversmiths Guild competition. I juried that one a couple of times.

I also came up to what was the 1st or 2nd organizational meeting of SNAG at the American Craft Museum. That's where I met a number of people and began the networking that I'm still trying to keep up with today.

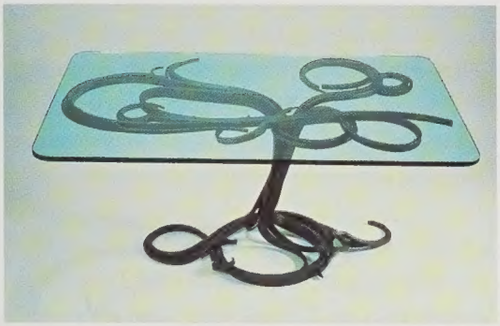
The Renwick had very few solo artist exhibitions then. It wasn't that we didn't want them, it's just that we weren't at the stage of maturity of the Craft Movement. We did start a new little gallery area just outside the museum shop and the first exhibition there was a small solo show of Albert Paley's jewelry. That was the first Paley link to the Renwick, and I think the first solo exhibition, certainly the first one in jewelry. Others – on Olaf Skoogfors, William Harper and Ronald Pearson – followed, but in a regular gallery on the second floor.

During the Seventies, several media organizations filled in where the ACC was not really serving its members. Handweavers Guild of America was already established and NCECA I'm sure was, but then SNAG came along and that was the first of the professional organizations. And now we have the American Society of Furniture Artists, and there's a wood turning organization. ABANA came after SNAG; everything getting increasingly specialized. I have only just learned about the Society of American Silversmiths.

Two things added to the stylistic and technical diversity of people working in these fields. First, crafts people banded together in organizations and then began producing publications. Second, a number of people traveled around giving workshops. I think that's been important to the diversity of processes and materials used by contemporary metalsmiths today.

But in contemporary metals programs many more processes have come to the fore. Think of all the coloring processes, patination, different materials. I don't know how much workshops and publications contribute to that, but I suspect quite a lot. I don't think it's all been through university courses.

W B-M Were there other initiatives that you developed, observed, or participated in that you felt had positive impact on the field?



Albert Paley
Dining Table, 1976
steel, brass, glass top
60 x 40 x 29″

Albert Paley's first solo exhibition at the Renwick included both jewelry and small scale metalwork of forged steel.

Albert Paley
Pendant, 1973
forged, fabricated and formed
sterling silver, copper, 14k,
antique cameo pearls, Delrin
17 x 4½ x 4 ½″

L H I tried to look for precedents in a given field and then compare them across other cultures. This makes people think about the kind of object, how the same material was used, how the same form or function can be represented in other ways.

At the Renwick, we tried to embrace Native crafts as well as folk art whenever there was an appropriate exhibition. The Smithsonian did not originate folk art shows then. The first one that we presented – of very few – was of 19th Century pieced quilts, a collection that had been shown at the Whitney Museum as the equivalent of contemporary painting. This is an example of that point of view which looks at the parallels between crafts (whether traditional or contemporary) and the other visual arts.

The museum store at the Renwick was going to sell only books, but people kept coming in wanting to know where they could buy crafts. At that time, in Washington, D.C., there were really only two places: Appalachian Spring and The American Hand. We decided to start doing craft sales exhibitions for two months at a time, and to focus on specific regions of the country or themes. We would have exhibitions of American crafts from Oregon or from West Virginia, or we would focus on the doll as a theme, or on non-precious jewelry. It was a way of broadening the exhibition program and making it more complete. It unfortunately left out the people who were doing commission work, and we never found a way to deal with that.

The Renwick's programs were lively and received favorable publicity. They also had a loyal audience. The James Renwick Collectors Alliance was formed carefully so that it was outside the Smithsonian bureaucracy. It's been enormously important to the Renwick's growth of its collections. I suggested to the Smithsonian Women's Committee that they look at what the Philadelphia Museum of Art Women's Committee had done in starting the Philadelphia Craft Show. We had the 1st Collectors Forum the year that they sponsored the Washington Craft Show.

W B-M What do you think could enhance the profile of jewelry and metalsmithing ?

L H I think we should try to educate writers who are entering the field so that they have a technical grasp of what they're writing about as well as to look at an artist's expressive point of view.

W B-M The materials and the techniques figure in quite extensively to what craftspeople are doing. The critic needs to be aware of the depth of those ties.

L H I think that is one of the of the dilemmas of writing or curating or making. If material and process dominate, then it's considered more "craft" than art, to raise that ugly specter again.

W B-M Are you seeing more Canadian jewelry and metalsmithing since becoming involved with The Canadian Craft Museum?

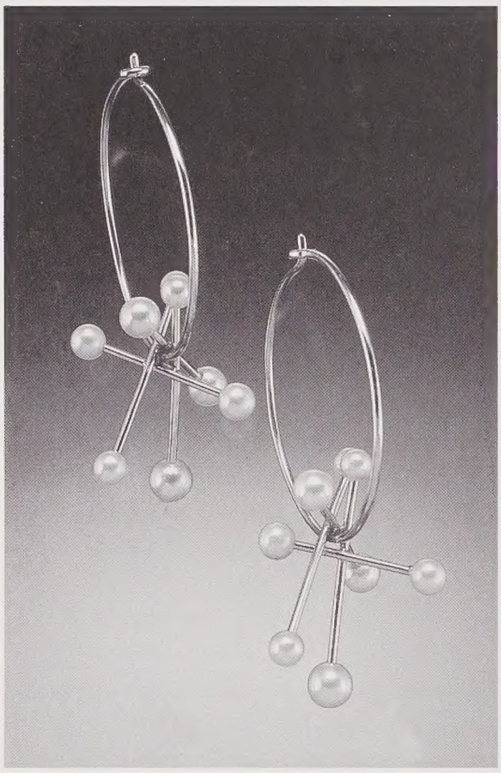
L H I was working last year as acting curator of The Canadian Craft Museum. My former assistant, the assistant curator, was planning to do the *Canadian Jewelry* show that I wanted to do when I was there. I don't think it will happen before 1995 or '96. She certainly shares my point of view that rather than having a large survey show, choose probably no more than 20 – 25 people and have several examples by each. And, choose them for their diversity and quality of work.

I think probably in Canada the most *avant garde* , if that term can still be used, jeweler would be Kai Chan. I think he's a very interesting, innovative maker. His work really transcends the conventional ideas of jewelry. I guess he's sort of the Marjorie Schick of Toronto. It's really more sculptural. He goes beyond what Marjorie does because he does room installations. He goes way beyond what could be put on the body.

Canada is a much more difficult country to work in than the United States, because everything is spread out along this thin line near the border. They are influenced by the United States without influencing us very much. That's very frustrating to them. There is a metals guild in Ontario and one in Quebec, but those are the only two I know of. There are other local jewelry guilds but the ones that I've seen exhibited pretty amateurish work.

W B-M From my perspective, Canadian metalsmiths and jewelers have kept a tighter emphasis on technique and design. Don Stuart's' work comes to mind, but in general, we haven't seen very much Canadian metalwork. Don just went onto the board of SNAG and perhaps that will change.

L H His work is fresh, but still rather conservative and not flamboyant. I think he's very well connected in Canada. He's been very active in the Ontario Crafts Council. The Metal Arts Guild has really been quite a good organization. I juried their competition two years ago and there's a lot of really interesting work.



Alan Revere
Earrings (Molecular Pearl Style)
14k, pearls

Canada has a smaller population base than the U.S., so it has obviously a smaller base from which to draw its craftsmen. I don't know if it's true in metalsmithing, but I did feel that the craft councils are tight within their own provinces. They don't communicate too much across the borders in a national way. That's been one of the dilemmas of The Canadian Craft Museum. Can we truly make that a national organization if we can't get any feedback and any participation-particularly from the eastern Provinces? They don't seem accustomed to sending their work beyond their own provincial borders.

The orientation of crafts people in Quebec is much more European. In the West there's much more affinity with the Pacific Rim, but it's more west coast U.S. than it is Asia. Then you have these huge population centers like Ontario, and, as in the United States, you see a concentration of interesting work around university programs.

W B-M I'd like to discuss the nature and characteristics of jewelry and metalsmithing and its success or failure in the commercial and museum worlds.

L H I think that the marketing of crafts has changed significantly since we opened the Renwick. And particularly it has changed in the metalsmithing field more than anything else. There are two things I can identify that have been important changes to your field. The ACE fairs which have pushed more people into production jewelry. Hardly anybody does silver hollowware anymore, except on commission, but pewter has become important. There have not been marketing opportunities for jewelers and metalsmiths comparable to people working in glass, and to a lesser extent, in wood. Clay remains kind of static. Fiber is the most difficult. Fiber has even more trouble finding a niche in the market.

W B-M It's strange because it seems to have very exciting work going on.

L H I agree, but there aren't enough places to sell it.

W B-M And metals seems to share that problem. The galleries that I have come in contact with are a little wary of metals.

L H They don't know what to do with anything other than jewelry. Jewelry is an identifiable commodity. There are certainly production jewelers, Alan Revere comes to mind, who are out there with a very competent, fashionable line. But he's typical of many people who are at the ACE fairs. Their work is not challenging. It's beautiful and it's in fashionable womenswear stores and in department stores. But I don't think it pushes the field forward. It simply is a quality example of what is there.

The ACE Fairs have given opportunities to jewelers, but they have also pushed others into jewelry who would have perhaps tried harder to make more of a niche for smaller sculptural objects. I know that it may have to do with the price of silver, the big factor in tea and coffee services and things of that sort.

Another change is that the metals and jewelry field has been in the forefront of professionalizing in terms of organizing SNAG. NCECA was certainly in existence before that but is primarily an academic organization. SNAG is too I believe. I remember those first newsletters very quickly transformed into a quality publication.

W B-M How do you view metalsmiths who are working sculpturally?

L H It's not so much what I find exciting as what I find missing, I guess. I wouldn't have even thought about it had Albert Paley not mentioned it when we were commissioning his gates for the Renwick and talking about the revived interest in architectural forged steel. He said that traditional tinsmithing was an area that similarly had remained unexplored. And he felt that sheet metal – I don't think it necessarily had to be tin – would be an area that would or should receive some greater creative exploration. And I agree.

I was in Paris a couple of years ago and was looking in very smart design shops where there were candelabras and tabletop objects that were totally contemporary in design but they were made by conventional cutting and soldering sheet metal. We don't have that. Nobody's doing that here, that I'm aware of.

In the time I've been working in the craft field I've been quite impressed to see all of these different processes. Not only the materials that are used, but the introduction of color possibilities with anodized aluminum and the refractory metals, the use of photographs and all sorts of industrial materials. The field is totally open.

I remember when Bob Cardinale organized the *Brass, Copper, Bronze* competitions down in Tucson. That was an important thing to do. But I haven't really seen a lot of work in those metals. Maybe it's just so integrated with other materials. I'm very aware of pewter because some people work only in pewter.

It is interesting that cast bronze seems to be becoming more popular, primarily with people doing vessels rather than forging ahead in dealing with sculptural concepts. And I think this is where there's a real gap between sculptors working in metals and metalsmiths making sculptures. For the most part I think that the reason there's not a real market opportunity for what someone refers to as table jewelry or tabletop sculptures is that it doesn't really fit into any niche. It doesn't seem to be in the art galleries. There doesn't seem to be a place for that.

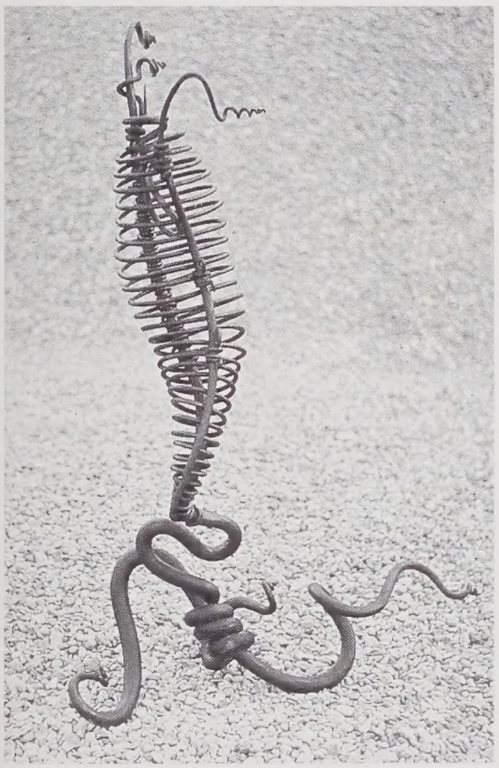
It's partly a problem with size. There aren't many art galleries that show sculpture, even of a large size. So, on one hand, we see people who were educated in clay like Michael Lucero and Peter Voulkos moving from clay into bronze.

I think one of the dilemmas for metalsmiths who are not making jewelry or not making functional objects is, where do they fit into our pre-conceived ideas of the art market ? I think that the tabletop sculptures may not succeed as sculpture because there may be something lacking in the education system for people working in metal... whether or not people in metalsmithing programs are taught to think in three-dimensions.

W B-M Learning technique is extremely time-consuming. Also, a lot of programs are very weak in art history requirements.

L H That's really an important part of any studio art program. I think it's important for art students to know what's gone before and to study the past to some degree. If they are interested in following more sculptural work then they probably need to study sculpture specifically.

W B-M Are there things that you could envision which might benefit the craft field and help the public understand and appreciate various crafts ?



Albert Paley
Candlestick, 1970
forged and fabricated steel
23″ h.

L H I think that it's going to be increasingly important to have video libraries. Initially the videos might be little more than video tours of retrospective exhibitions. Such a library could include monographs on an artist with footage of the artist in the studio, showing a bit about the processes and the environment in which works were made, and showing works in progress.

We also need more conventional publications to reach a broader audience. I think *The Guild* has really been a first rate publication. For me, those have been important reference books. I'm guessing that architects and designers keep them around.

The Corning Museum does the annual *New Glass Review* to show directions in glass art. That is a really valuable document; it's like an exhibition catalog without an exhibition. In fact, that is something that could be done in every field. That is one thing lacking in jewelry and metalsmithing more than the other craft disciplines. (Editor's Note: *Metalsmith*'s first *Exhibition in Print* will be published in the Fall of 1994.) The only contemporary jewelry book I can think of is Peter Dormer's: *The New Jewelry: Trends and Traditions.*

The metals field has been less successful getting into public view than other craft media over the last 20 years. It may be a result of there being relatively few exhibitions and publications that acquaint the public with what's being made, what's out there. Of course it's a vicious circle because the publishers or film makers, whatever, don't see other books or videos to know that there's something lively going on. So, for the most part it rests on exhibition catalogs.

I've been trying to develop a master list of museums in the U.S. and Canada that have some interest in craft, from the perspective of collecting a single material, or a kind of object, or from a decorative arts context. I hope to establish a data base so we can develop a better network, and share it.

Lloyd Herman's current traveling exhibitions are *Tales and Traditions: Storytelling in Twentieth-Century American Craft* co-curated with Matthew Kangas; *Brilliant Stories: American Narrative Jewelry*, and *Clearly Art: Pilchuck's Glass Legacy.* He is also a consultant for Oregon State University's Thundering Seas Institute which is developing a new craft museum, and an expanded academic program in crafts including jewelry and metalworking. Mr. Herman is an honorary Fellow of the American Craft Council.

William Baran-Mickle is a metalsmith and a frequent contributor to Metalsmith.

The Future Perfect: Activism and Advocacy

The Future Perfect: Activism and Advocacy was given as an oral presentation at "Celebrating a New Metals Order," The 1993 Annual SNAG Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio

Text: Kathleen Browne

The American Arts and Crafts Movement at its pinnacle, nearly a century ago, ushered in a new era for crafts; it brought together artists, designers, craftspersons, architects and writers who all coalesced around philosophical tenets linking socialistic utopian idealism with art and aesthetics. During the 1930's and 1940's craft production was inexorably linked to the burgeoning field of industrial design. After W.W.II university art departments grew by leaps and bounds due to the influx of veterans attending college on the GI Bill. There was a renewed interest in crafts and to accommodate this interest, crafts, particularly ceramics, weaving and metals, became a part of the university art curriculum. As painters, sculptors, ceramists, metalsmiths, and printmakers were educated side by side, the boundaries separating fine arts and crafts began to diminish. During the 1950's and 1960's the 'isms' that were important in painting and sculpture had their unique expression in craft media. The contribution that California Funk Ceramics made to the Pop Art Movement is only one example. During the post-war years and particularly in the 1970's work in craft media struck a Modernist pose. This failed miserably because craft has always been dependent on its function and is founded in culture. These characteristics were antithetical to the heroic self-referential painting and sculpture of the post-war period.

At the same time a powerful movement was being born. Feminist artists who had been shut out of the mainstream began experimenting with ways of working that were on the fringes of acceptability. There was a liberation felt by being on the outside. They explored installation, performance, and video art and took non-traditional approaches to media that often included craft. One method was to take traditional women's activities: sewing, quilting, weaving, etc. and celebrate them as honorable and worthy activities.

Many craftspersons and fine artists as well were influenced by the what was happening in architecture and the developments which came to be called "postmodernism". Confusing style for content they embraced the colors, shapes and forms of the New Wave or Memphis, or whatever one may call it, without considering the insidious deal struck with fashion. It was more about a look than an idea.

A troubling stage for craftspersons came from the influence of the French New Left and what came to be know as Simulationism. Jean Baudrillard in his influential book titled *Simulations* expressed the idea that the cultural cornerstones of Capitalism, such as the information and communication networks, media, publicity, and fashion masked and perverted reality by only presenting a simulation of reality. Although much artistic practice of the mid 1980's was driven by these theories, ultimately it seemed contradictory to produce artifacts which would alienate us further from reality. In other words, to quote Baudrillard, "in the world of simulation there is no object".[1] One can image the horror of a graduate student in crafts encountering this material for the first time and anticipating a gloomy future.

Fortunately, into the 1990's this nihilistic point of view has given way to an atmosphere of openness, a focus on diversity and an emphasis on social engagement. A good portion of contemporary art work is moving away from 'objectness'. Unlike the works of high Modernism craft has always been based in cultural production and collective attitudes.

During a 1986 Mountain Lake Symposium in Virginia leading art critics discussed "The Evaluative Process in Contemporary Art".[2] The Re-enchantment Project as coined by critic and writer Suzi Gablik, called for artists to "redefine art's 'visionary function' of healing and social integration".[3] Yves-Alain Bois called for a "new critical framework based on political morality."[4] Critic Donald Kuspit stated, "to be significant, art must accomplish a psychological task."[5] These three different but related ideas, are ideas that I think craft in general and metalsmithing in particular can speak to eloquently. Here lies a window of opportunity.

I would hope that there is no one who still believes that metalsmithing will someday be recognized as 'Fine Art'. This residue of Modernism buys directly into the divisiveness of hierarchy instead of the strength of diversity. That doesn't change the fact that we still feel disenfranchised and marginalized by the art world in general. The salient question here is, How do we overcome these obstacles so that we can have our proverbial "piece of the pie"? To help answer this question let's look at the recent successes of two marginalized populations: Latino and Native American artists.

Both groups are currently receiving much attention as evidenced by the College Art Association devoting issues of *Art Journal* to a discussion of their artistic production. Additionally there have been increased venues for exhibitions and the publication of important catalogs and books. How did they do it? Surprisingly, without much compromise.

Craft has a tremendous potential to be

Political action, advocacy, infiltration and subversion sounds like the 1960's doesn't it? To quote a film character recently played by Dennis Hopper "the '90's are going to make the '60's look like the '50's."[6] Well, with regard to our own much needed revolution, I certainly hope so!

Often Latino and Native American artists are highly politicized. Mainly as subjects of long-standing racism and cultural negation they have had to organize for their own survival. We, on the other hand, are a fairly complacent bunch; we are going to have to overcome a certain amount of inertia to become activists. Advocacy for our field means an ongoing vigilance, a Mormon zeal for getting out the message.

Latino and Native American artists are beneficiaries of Affirmative Action albeit a little too little, a little too late. They have infiltrated Boards of Directors of art funding and art educating agencies such as the College Art Association. They have become highly sought after artists-in-residence at academic institutions. Metalsmiths, on the other hand, are a very isolated group. We rarely journey outside our field. The College Art Association is surprisingly influential in scholarship, criticism, education, and the job market; yet, I rarely see metalsmiths at the conferences unless they are interviewing candidates for their university or looking for jobs; both activities which prohibit them from participating in the conference. At the last three conferences over three hundred sessions were held - only three of them on topics directly relating to craft. We need visibility and leadership in a broader spectrum of arts organizations.

Craft has a tremendous potential to be subversive. Because of the long-standing traditions of cultural engagement, and of function we have access to a wider range of the public. Craft is understood, at times, when fine art is not. If we produce work whose content serves to challenge and/or invigorate culture in some way can we then have a serious impact because of our perceived accessibility? Last Spring I curated the craft exhibition: *Material Vision: Image and Object* at the Tarble Art Center at Eastern Illinois University. Donna Meeks, the Curator of Education there told me that the workers from the physical plant at the university were coming in on their lunch breaks to see the show, sometimes repeatedly. This group rarely if ever attended exhibitions. The work in the exhibition was not functional or traditional in any way, and much of it was conceptually or socially challenging. I believe that because of the materiality and the involvement of hand skills in the works, these painters, carpenters and plumbers felt that the work was accessible. It got them in the door where they, hopefully, encountered some challenging ideas.

I would like to focus on the language of criticism for a moment. People in our field have bemoaned for years the fact that there is no critical vocabulary or language with which to properly assess crafts. I believed this as well; but, I am now of the mind to think that this attitude is perhaps the greatest impediment to getting down to the business of critical writing in the field. In the Fall 1992 issue of *Art Journal*, devoted to recent Native American Art, Editor W. Jackson Cushing discussed the difficulty with language in his editor's statement. While selecting a title for the issue the editors felt that "By appealing to a hierarchical system (high/fine, popular, folk, primitive, tourist/kitsch) dependent on class and cultural otherness is to capitulate, conceptually at least, to an aesthetic ideology that valorizes certain media at the expense of others. We thus made a conscious decision not to call this an issue on contemporary Indian art, recognizing that contemporary Native practice includes a variety of "traditional" forms, such as textiles, ceramics, wood carving, beadwork, and basketry, which are not discussed here".[7] Many of the essayists struggled with language as well, finding that it is difficult to characterize the work in Modernist or Postmodernist terms as the work tends "toward categorical nonconformity".[8]

As the deconstruction of post-columbian history takes place, Latino art, art that blends European, Native and African cultures, demands to be analyzed within its historical and cultural context. Like Latino art, crafts is intrinsically bound to its unique history. If we are waiting for great thinkers in our field to hand down tablets from the mount we will miss the opportunity to shape our own future.

The "Year of American Craft" was an opportunity to focus national attention on work being made in craft media. Due to this official designation there were an increased number of exhibition venues. Museum directors seemed less resistant to funding large craft exhibitions first of all because it sounded good on the grant application, secondly, it came with free publicity and lastly because of the warm, fuzzy feeling they got knowing that they had done their part to support a marginalized population.

subversive

As makers, writers and curators we hope that this attention will make more funds available for research, and more opportunity for publication. My cynical side hears the echoes of Black History Month or Women's Awareness Month which for many institutions are designations made with the intent to placate women and African Americans so that they can generally be ignored the rest of the year. But not wanting to count the teeth of the "gift horse" it is incumbent upon makers, writers, historians and other associates in the field to maximize the opportunity not only to 'bask in the glow' but to take a long hard look at where we are, what issues we need to address and how to plan for the Century of American Craft.

In spite of the excellent work being created the obstacles that metalsmiths face are significant: scholarship that is spotty and lacks focus, criticism that is soft due primarily to the 'buddy review system', our struggle to maintain educational programs, and our often dubious relationships with the people who sell and represent our work.

Nancy Lee, formerly of the SNAG Book Service, has begun to compile a bibliography on metalsmithing and related subjects. This bibliography is by no means comprehensive but it does represent the first tier of materials commonly available in libraries. The bibliography includes generalized historical surveys but as yet does not cover the numerous historical topics such as colonial silver or Chinese bronzes with any depth. The contents of this bibliography do, however, point out some rather large gaps in scholarship in the field: 70% of the entries are technical books; 20% are historical and non-western topics; and 10% are books or catalogs that display contemporary work, ⅓ of which also include technical data.

So far no book traces the contribution metals has made to the 20th century crafts movement. Historical articles about individual metalsmiths occasionally surface in such periodicals as *Metalsmith, Ornament* or *The Anvil's Ring* but no comprehensive survey of important figures in the field has ever been attempted. These histories are passed down, rather quaintly, from professor to graduate student, nostalgically as part of an oral history. Exhibition catalogs that accompany such exhibitions as *Lifetime Achievements: The American Craft Council College of Fellows in Metal* exhibition at the National Ornamental Metals Museum are indeed important documents. But these efforts don't compare to the quality of catalogs coming out of Europe. American craft exhibition catalogs are often folksy and contain extraneous anecdotal information that serve to deny scholarly intent.

One must remain somewhat hopeful as the next generation of art historians look to crafts as a viable field of study. Until that time metalsmiths, such as Mary Douglas, a recent Renwick Fellow in Craft Criticism, will do double duties as artists and scholars.

This year *Metalsmith* magazine will begin publishing a 5th issue. The intention of this issue is to showcase new work in the field. I hope the content of the issue goes beyond photographs and can serve as a yearly scholarly document assessing the field. This could be best accomplished by inviting a writer/critic/scholar outside the realm of making to evaluate the work and perhaps put it in its historical context. I would also like to see SNAG take on the task of compiling and publishing an anthology of articles about individual artists that have appeared in *Metalsmith* over the years. It would at least be an attempt to gather this important information into one place.

Metalsmiths, like artists in other craft media, are a close-knit community of people. Community affiliation in the crafts has its origin as far back as the guild systems of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The magazines that focus on the activity in a certain medium are often published by the organization to which many of the artists working in that medium belong, like SNAG. In metals, many of the articles and most of the reviews are written by fellow artists and members of the organization. When very few reviews call into question the quality of the work or go beyond description or mindless cheer leading, it makes one think, are we just that damn good? or is the system, incestuous by nature, not providing a forum for a critical review of the work? These reviews get bogged down in description of subject matter, materials, and techniques and conspicuously avoid confronting issues regarding content, let alone quality. What is needed are writers trained in criticism to come from outside the realm of making. But in reality, although the numbers are growing, this is still a relatively small pool upon which to draw. Those among us who do write criticism must be willing to scrutinize the work without the fear of diminished peer popularity. Many metalsmiths decry the fact that criticism in our field is soft but I suspect that many of us have become too comfortable to put our own work on the line. To gain credibility as a group we have to be willing to take our punches.

If we are waiting for great thinkers in our field to hand down tablets from the mount

In preparing the presentation from which this article comes I examined reviews from 5 years (20 issues) of *Metalsmith* and I found some startling statistics. I only looked at reviews of contemporary work eliminating reviews of historical exhibitions or reviews of conferences and symposiums. Out of 152 reviews only 1.5% gave a negative assessment of the work; 3.5% of the reviews were neither positive or negative but were merely descriptive; 18% of the reviews were mostly positive but called into question some aspect of the work. (I was very liberal with this category in that the slightest negative comment would put the review in this category); the remaining 77% of the reviews made a positive assessment of the work.

Another area examined was description verses interpretation of the work. By interpretation I mean the reviewer attempted to interpret the work or talk about the content or meaning of the work in some way. 36% of the reviews were primarily descriptive. In other words the reviewer described the formal elements of the work and/or the techniques and processes employed in the making. The remaining 64% described the work as well as attempted to interpret the work. These numbers support the position that we are promoting instead of critiquing the work.

While doing this research I came across a review written by Seattle critic Ron Glowen. I have followed his columns and reviews in *Artweek* for years and have never known him to pull his punches. In his review of *The Integrity of Metal, I, II, III* exhibition he states "Large group shows also tip the hand of the reviewer. The works one selects to discuss or mention may be exceptions to the general tenor of the show, or they may only reflect personal taste and judgment. With the wide artistic and technical range presented by 35 artists, I feel inclined to simply point out the works that attracted or intrigued me the most."[9] He was gentle with his criticism after making the above disclaimer.

This quote points out the rule and not the exception to the way crafts and particularly metals is reviewed. Pick out a few nice things to say and avoid the rest. The quality of the work is one of the least discussed subjects in our field.

The other important issue regarding reviews is "who is reviewing whom?". By far the best reviews I read were written by people outside the realm of making; Janet Koplos, Michael Dunas, Vannesa Lynn, to name a very few. That is not to say that some metalsmiths don't write excellent reviews but often times they are too close to the work or too close to the person they are reviewing to make a independent assessment. I found repeated instances of, what I would consider, inappropriate review relationships such as close friends reviewing each others work, or more typically, students reviewing former professors work. In one instance a curator reviewed the show he curated. With such obvious conflicts of interest how can we take ourselves seriously or be taken seriously by others?

Those of us in education know that the university system gives us ample opportunity to practice advocacy and activism; on the most fundamental levels – to save programs from total elimination. (I am indeed one of the beneficiaries of Bruce Metcalf and his student's militancy exercised to save the metals Program at Kent State University.) Within our programs we are charged with the task of teaching design, technique, safety, conceptual development, critical thinking, current theory and craft history; all in six hours a week, 16 weeks a semester.

Very few schools offer a *History of Crafts* course and if they do it is usually because a studio person has put in the time and energy to develop it and teach it. If that person is a one person area, teaching the history class is sometimes to the detriment of the studio: a damned if you do damned if you don't situation. A compromise situation might be to meet with the art history staff and offer to augment certain courses with a lecture or two presenting some aspect of craft history or a crafts perspective.

One of the big questions I ask myself as an educator is: Am I preparing my students for a professional life in the field? When there are 2 - 3 university teaching jobs available each year with as many students receiving MFA's from each graduate program in Metals one cannot believe or lead their students to believe that teaching is a viable career goal. I still believe in the idea of a liberal arts education. I feel that the main purpose for an education is intellectual and personal development while most students see it at a stepping stone to career opportunity. I could focus on skill development, speed and marketing but I refuse to succumb to a purely trade school mentality. I expect that my students, particularly at the graduate level, produce work that focuses on content; that has social, political, or personal relevance.

Unfortunately, work that is concept or content based has little financial viability in this country. As an educator I get a check at the end of each month which gives me the freedom to produce work without regard to marketability. There are plenty of non-commercial venues such as university galleries and museums where studio jewelry can be shown. One of the most pressing questions we face is how do we develop an active market that will support individual artists outside academia?

To get more insight into this question I conducted telephone interviews with a number of gallery directors. I selected galleries from different geographical locations. The type of work shown in these galleries ranged widely from high karat gold, at Quadrum Gallery in Boston, to more conceptual and narrative work at Susan Cummins Gallery in Northern California. These gallery directors hardly spoke with one voice but there were some interesting consistencies.

When asked how they would characterize the type of work shown in the gallery most of them said the work focused on good design. Several of them said that they also carried narrative or content oriented work but I felt that only two in this group had a strong commitment to representing this work. When asked: "How important is intrinsic value or the preciousness of materials to their sales?" most said that such considerations were not important. But when asked "What is the easiest work to sell?" most said work made from precious materials at a good price. "The hardiest to sell?" Conceptual work out of alternative materials, because clients don't understand why the work is so expensive. There seems to be a substantive difference between what dealers think and what they do.

Those that handle narrative or content based work say that developing collectors for the work is a long process. The collectors start out with more conventional purchases but ongoing advocacy and education on the part of the gallery personnel will eventually lead collectors to purchase more conceptual work. Few galleries, I suspect, have the where-with-all or the resources to see this process through. When asked how their staff stays informed about the trends in contemporary metalsmithing all said through periodicals such as *Metalsmith* (their #1 choice). What an awesome responsibility we have and what a tremendous opportunity.

I asked "How important are artist's statements in interpreting the work?" some said "not very" one said she preferred to interpret the work herself.[10] Most said they are helpful but one felt that they are often poorly written (she calls this the "mist on the mountain" syndrome) and chooses to have long, detailed conversations with the artists instead.[11]

Overall I found a direct correlation between the galleries ability (and desire) to sell concept and content oriented work and the amount of time and energy the gallery personnel were willing to expend on the process. I ask you, how can we actively support and enhance this process? Certainly our publications provide some opportunity, but it will take a much greater effort on our part to develop a marketplace that will support work beyond the simply decorative.

I have certainly asked many more questions than I have answered, but I hope that I have given voice to many of the issues that concern us so that we can open a dialogue that will offer some solutions.

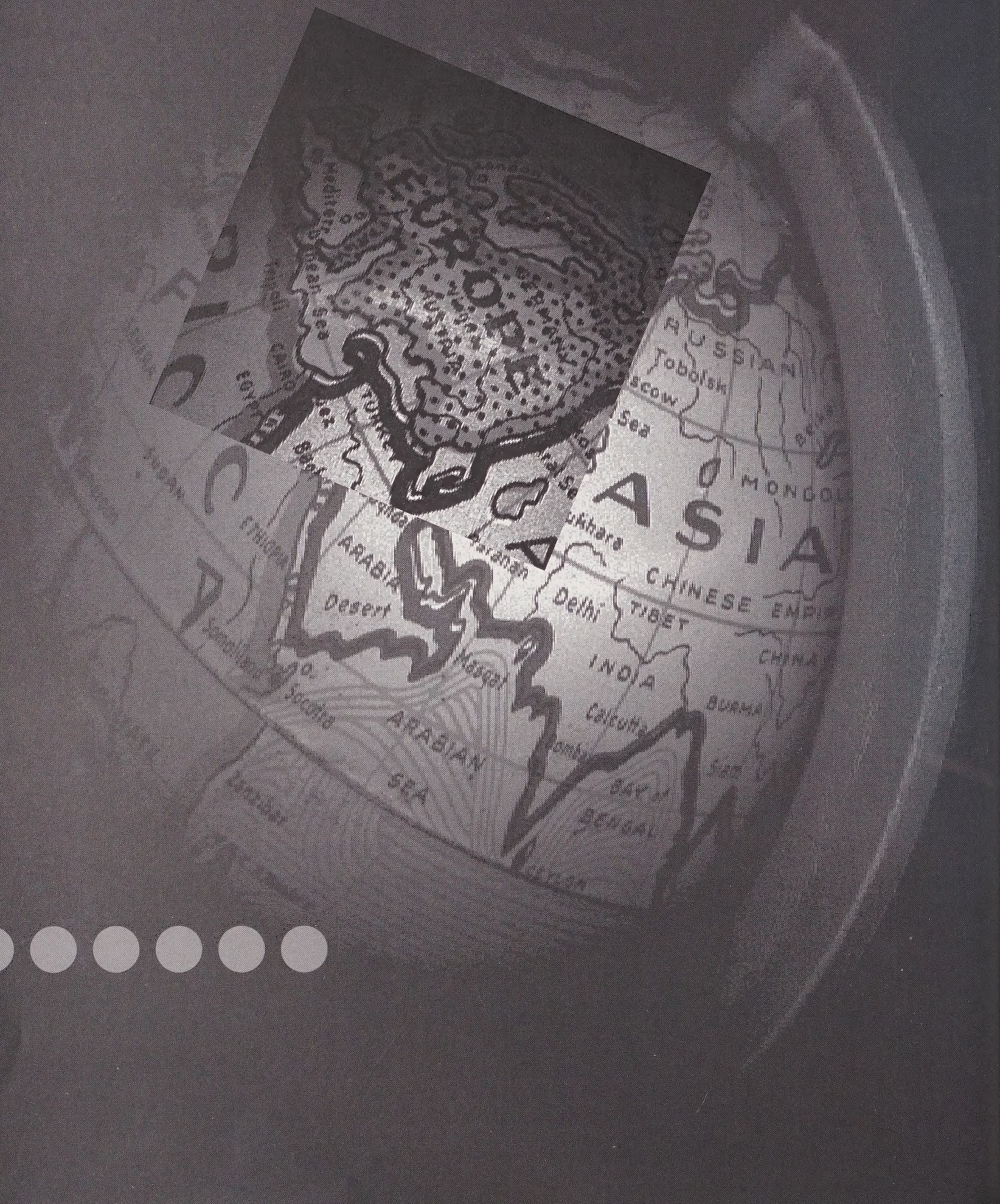
we will miss the opportunity to shape our own future

Kathleen Browne is a metalsmith, an activist, and a teacher of metals at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

Notes

1 *ARTnews* (September 1987) as quoted in Grant Kester, "The Rise and Fall of Baudrillard," *New Art Examiner* (November, 1987).
2 Shaw Smith "Postmodernism Seeks a Soul," *New Art Examiner,* (March 1987): 32.
3 Ibid.33
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 *Flashback*
7 W. Jackson Cushing, "Critical Issues in Recent Native American Art,"*Art Journal,* (Fall 1992): 6.
8 Jean Fisher, Ibid.
9 Ron Glowen, "The Integrity of Metal, I, II, III," *Metalsmith,* (Winter 1993): 45.
10 Martha Schneider, Schneider, Blume, Loeb Gallery, Chicago Illinois.
11 Susan Cummings, Susan Cummings Gallery, Marin, California.

European Notebook



Text: James Evans

For your European correspondent it was Christmas in Brighton and then New Years in Paris – which is not the worst way to see in the New Year. Having purchased several bottles of French champagne – at a special price of 49 francs a bottle (yes, that's $2.50 to you!). I settled down to poached salmon with fumet de poisson, fresh wild mushrooms, puree of Chinese artichokes , sweet potato and carrot , very good company and floated into 1994. Hours into the New Year and I had my first bout of guilt – the copy for this piece was due on the 1st of January. And so another year begins...

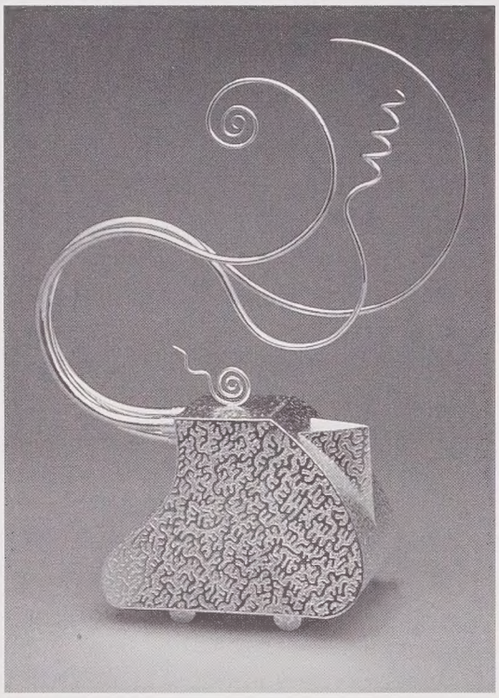
Over on this side of the Atlantic we academics enter into Spring term with our students, hoping to motivate them through the winter months and especially to raise them above the dreaded international phenomenon of February blues.

The dozen or so of you who *read* my last Notebook – I know some must have because I was contacted by an American colleague, Bob Griffiths, with whom professional and personal contact was made of a mutually beneficial nature – will know about the British Artist Blacksmith's Association. This organisation in collaboration with an as yet unnamed sponsor is organising a major touring exhibition to be held in 1995 called *Fe: An Exploration of Iron through the Senses.* It is planned to tour this exhibition for two years through the U.K. and then Europe with venues still to be announced. It will open at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow and will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. Of particular interest to all those smiths reading this is that it is an international competition and open to anyone – you do not have to be a member of the organisation.

Fe will be a survey of current work, intended to be an update of sorts of the notable *New Iron Age* exhibition which was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1980. There is a brief for this exhibition which asks for pieces which address the aural, tactile or olfactory nature of the material. Pieces for submission could address weight, balance, ease of movement, shape, texture, temperature; and pieces may be pushed, turned, sat upon, opened, closed, assembled and disassembled, etceteras. They may be struck and sounded or plucked, twanged, etceteras. The brief is very broad and interesting. Further information about deadlines, registration, venues, requirements, and the rest may be obtained by contacting Shona Johnson; 115 Main Street; Ratho, Newbridge, Lothian; Scotland; EH28 8RS; United Kingdom. The telephone number is 031.333.1824 (days), 031.335.3565 (evenings), and by fax 031.333.3354.

There will be a weighty new tome coming to your bookshops in April. No less an authority than Professor David Watkins, currently, Head of Department at the Royal College of Art, and possibly better known as one of the most significant contemporary jewellery artists of the last 30 years, has written – and judging by the price, lavishly illustrated – *The Best In Contemporary Jewellery*. The book is published in England by Batsford and will be released in April, the price £35, about $75. As with all of these subjective collections it will be interesting to see who is included and even more interesting to see who is not.

For the next two items which I wish to write about, you will again need to refer to the last installment of European Notebook – I swear that I'm not getting a kickback for these referrals!! The phenomenon that goes under the name of *The New Designers* has just changed its format and emphasis. This exhibition, held in London at the Business Design Centre, shows the work of newly graduated art and design school students from across the U.K. each July. Over 50 courses show a select amount of work from their over 1000 graduates – including, obviously, all the jewellery and metal programmes. It is a must–see survey of each year's student work. The tried and tested format was a four day exhibition of all colleges and universities and all disciplines at one time. Due to overwhelming demand from the institutions and the great popularity of this once a year bazaar it has just been announced that *New Designers 1994* will be organised thus:



Kevin O'Dwyer
Mad Hatter's Teapot, 1993
silver

Robert Marsden
The Eighth Loop, 1990

Photos courtesy
the Crafts Council of Great Britain

Show One – Commercial and Industrial Design. The show will preview on Wednesday, 6 July and run until Sunday, 10 July. It will include contract lighting, commercial furniture, graphics, contract flooring, architectural glass and metalwork, ceramics for manufacture, animation, product, interior and architectural design, transport design and design management.

Show Two – Consumer and Domestic Design. This show will preview on Wednesday 13 July and run until Sunday 17 July. It will include textiles, fashion, ceramics, tableware, jewellery, silverware, pewter, domestic glass and metalwork, domestic furniture, surface pattern, floor and wall-coverings.

So, if you should be in London in July, you would be well recommended to visit this massive survey exhibition and take in the work of all the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish art and design graduates of 1994. (Do I sense some staff development travel grants being considered??)

Secondly, a note about my previous comments on the Crafts Council Gallery. As if to undermine my observations about the less-than stimulating exhibitions of late they offer two strong back to back exhibitions: *Twentieth Century Silver* and more importantly, to my eyes, *The Chemistry Set.* This was an inspired exhibition of coloured and patinated metals in contemporary craft. It was a pretty good survey of the best of current British metal workers – 24 in all. The fact that 17 of them are graduates of the Royal College of Art speaks volumes about that institution's work (and stature) – not to mention the huge influence that Michael Rowe, as Senior Lecture at that institution, has had. A show with a theme such as patination would not have been conceivable without his shadow looming over all the artists, not to mention his impressive work of scholarship written with Richard Hughes, *The Colouring, Bronzing and Patination of Metals,* oft copied but never bettered or even rivaled. It was good then to see the not-so-old master displaying some authoritative new pieces. Mention should be made of Clara Vichi's distinctive and developing pieces and my own favourite artist for originality and eccentricity, Hazel Jones.

Now, while you have missed *The Chemistry Set* at the Crafts Council, it will be on tour and can be seen in Leicester from 2 October until 13 November at the City Gallery, contact Maria Brewster at 0533.540.595.

I sense that my allotted space is contracting rapidly, so my final entry concerns a professional organisation here that I wish to draw *Metalsmith* readers attention to: NASJDE. This abbreviation stands for the rather long-winded National Association of Silversmiths and Jewellers in Design Education. It represents the interests – academic and professional – of its membership which is culled from the numerous colleges and universities across the United Kingdom. There have been in the past tangential contacts with SNAG – certainly many members of both organisations are acquainted with each other informally or otherwise – but the sometime mooted idea of holding a SNAG conference in London in conjunction with NASJDE or possibly an exchange exhibition has never progressed beyond the concept stage. Personally, I feel that such an event – while nightmarish in organisational terms – would have tremendous impact, influence, and momentum not to mention many obvious spin-off benefits for individuals such as academic exchanges and related professional intercourse.

There is an annual conference of the organisation with notable speakers and topical seminars – SNAG members have certainly been welcomed previously and spoken about their organisation. Again I reiterate, the much-heralded 'special relationship' that is perceived to exist between North America and the U.K. could find some form of cultural expression with further interaction between the two organisations. Any takers?

It leaves me only to wish all and sundry a Healthy and Prosperous New Year and to leave you with a resonant quotation from Erik Satie, "Although our information is incorrect, we do not vouchsafe for it."

James Evans is currently the Head of Metals at the University of Brighton.
He has written for *Metalsmith, Art Aurea, American Craft,* and *Kunsthandvekere.*

The End of an Era

The Closing of Robert Lee Morris's Artwear

Seventeen years ago Robert Lee Morris opened Artwear in the Soho section of New York City. Quickly becoming a breeding ground for the hottest new talent in the "jewelry as artform/wearable art" arena, Artwear created a market that had not previously existed – that of the jewelry designer as a collectible entity.

In the 1970s, with the exception of the Sculpture to Wear Gallery, also located in New York City, which only showed jewelry made by well-known artists like Picasso, Calder, and Man Ray; and the work of Elsa Peretti under the sponsorship of Tiffany, there were virtually no markets for the purveyors of the notion of jewelry as art to wear. Robert Lee Morris set about changing all of that when he opened Artwear, raising the consciousness of art historians, artisans, and collectors, as well as members of the fashion industry and its accompanying publications.

Artwear became a status symbol in and of itself. Artists who exhibited there did not remain unknown designers; they began to receive the kind of press attention that was once reserved for fine artists and fashion designers. Artwear acquired a reputation for quality exhibitions, showing the works by designers who were on the cutting edge of their field, and much of that work became the impetus for a variety of innovative trends. But, time and the fashion industry, coupled with the economy, have altered collecting and acquisition. As Robert Lee Morris stated, "At this time closing Artwear makes sense. Good form and grace call for knowing when to leave a party at the right time."

Morris pointed out that American jewelry designers no longer have the support they once had from the fashion press and have had to create a new way of doing business. Galleries were not the answer. Showrooms, agents, and artists reps took the place of galleries. More outlets were needed to provide visibility for artists, and Artwear, being a singularly small business could not possibly represent and provide the much needed visibility by itself.

Although Robert Lee Morris is saddened by the gallery's closing, he has plans to double the size of his own gallery which is located across the street from Artwear. Also, there will be a retrospective of his work at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology in the not too distant future. And last, but certainly not least, he will continue to be a strong believer in the idea of art to wear, providing support and recognition for its innovators. One era has ended for Robert Lee Morris but the entrepreneur is looking optimistically towards the future, and the beginning of a new one.

Dorothy Spencer writes about jewelry from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Dear Editor,
I would like to respond to Carrie Adell's comments about my article, "On the Nature of Jewelry". [*Metalsmith* Winter 1994] First, Adell's confusion of the word "nature" with the "natural" is merely silly. If she had bothered to look the word up in any dictionary, she would have discovered that an ordinary definition of "nature" is synonymous with essence, disposition, or temperament. This is obviously the sense in which I used the word. The article was an attempt to examine the characteristics of jewelry, which I freely admit is a cultural practice.

Her poem about "artspeak" bothers me. "Artspeak" suggests pretentious, overblown language in the service of muddy thinking. I have to say that I always try to make my writing clear and self-explanatory, and I avoid using art-criticism that the *Metalsmith* readership may not be familiar with. If my thinking was unclear, or my perceptions wrong I wish Ms. Adell would have addressed those problems directly. Instead, she implies that I am producing P.R. for my own aggrandizement, to create a mystery which only I can interpret. Well, I have no desire to become the grand wizard of jewelry. The accusation is mean-spirited.

Ms. Adell is wrong when she claims that critical writing is always a rationale after the fact. All artists, craftspeople, and designers participate in the world of ideas: we use them constantly. Those ideas often came from writers and critics. For instance, Adell's metal touchstones rely on Surrealists and Dadaists who made so-called "primitive" cultures visible to the American art world. Ritual and fetish objects, and the direct transaction with nature and spirit that they suggest, were not the proper subject matter for art before those artists and writers intervened. Adell owes them a debt, which she evidently denies. She obviously believes in the power of intuition, which is fine, but intuition needs to be balanced with a measure of analytical thought. It's Adell's anti-intellectualism that bugs me the most.

What do jewelers do? What is jewelry anyway? I'm simply trying to understand. If Adell has good ideas on the subject, let's hear from her. Otherwise, it serves no purpose to attack those who are asking questions and sharing their conclusions with the community.

— Bruce Metcalf

Dear Editor,
Thank you for publishing Beverly Penn's article, "The Narrative Impulse in Contemporary American Metal". It was educational, entertaining and technically excellent. I especially appreciated two aspects of the article. One, the marginal quotes were not merely lifted from the text, but were supplemental to it – truly marginalia. Two, every work discussed was illustrated, and illustrated in a manner that made it possible to actually see the points that were discussed! Such illustration should be common in art criticism/education, but has become so rare that I felt I must commend you and Ms. Penn for it.

— Jan Webber

[Editor's Note: A significant amount of credit should also be extended to *Metalsmith*'s graphic designers Mary Melilli and Richard Mehl, who, as always, show great sensitivity to the marriage of image and text which is so important to *Metalsmith's* mission and success.]

LETTERS CONTINUE ON PAGE 44

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

Dear Editor,

As someone who is as passionate about the metal arts as anyone who subscribes to this publication, I am concerned about the future of our field. I was recently disturbed by the obvious discomfort, if not disapproval, of a panel of educators at the SNAG conference when the topic of business practices was brought up. Adding to my anxiety was the amount of distress over the lack of teaching opportunities. Does anyone see the correlation here?

Experience has taught me that there is little time left for discussing post academic life after having adequately covered concept, technique and design in the classroom. However, condescension in the air permeates the mind and soul. Our professors are our mentors. Their ideology becomes ours.

To perpetuate a belief that pure art can only be achieved by those who are relieved of the economic strain on their creativity is not only naive, but foolish. As long as our graduates outnumber our retirees, academic positions will be scarce. The advocate of the production of nothing but the purest of art is commendable. But the insinuation that this art is over the heads and out of the pocketbook range of the consumer, is pure ignorance. It also fails to recognize that we cannot survive in an insular community. We need consumers if we are to support the growing number of graduates in our field.

Those of you who are even vaguely familiar with the art market are no doubt aware of the glass community. Today, the most highly respected glass artists are self employed, usually with a good sized work force and scores of collectors happy to pay well for one of their pieces. Although you can still find the old arguments about whose work is pure and who is milking an idea to death, a fundamental difference remains between them and us. In short, a successful businessperson in the glass arts has prestige in the community.

A lot of this can be attributed to their consumers – "The Collectors", who themselves have attained a level of prestige among peers for having the insight and the resources to have obtained significant works. They know the works. They want the best. And they are willing to pay for it. Where did these collectors come from? The glass artists created the them. They educated them by banning [sic] together and providing a stimulating abundance of talent. It took a long time. There were few collectors and even fewer galleries who had an interest in glass a couple of decades ago.

The collectors groups are now swelling in ranks. The galleries, who have profited well from this new relationship, are now more than happy to take on the burden of education and organization. The collectors rarely miss an opportunity to increase their collection and are dedicated to furthering their understanding of the arts through attending lectures, seminars, and hands-on events. The glass community thrives because it has generated an interested clientele [sic] and a level of prestige associated with the successful manufacture and marketing of their work.

There is an incredible demand for art of exceptional quality in all media. As a community, we should advocate our strength and talent in numbers. We should work together to educate the public. A lot of work has already been done. We now have a public that wants to know more, to see more, to buy more. There is strength in numbers, but our ranks are divided. To be sure, the journey to self-sufficiency in the arts is a difficult one. If achievement of that goal leads to disdain from our mentors, then our mentors are doing our entire community a disservice.

— Julie Anne Mihalisin

Dear Editor,

"Kanga[s], I see the time has come to speak plainly".....
"Can't you see*?" shouted Piglet. "Haven't you got* eyes*? Look at me!"*
"I am *looking, Roo, dear," said Kanga[s] rather severely.*
"And you know what I told you yesterday about making faces like Piglet's, you will grow up to look like Piglet – and then think how sorry you'll be. Now then, into the bath, and don't let me have to speak to you about it again."
A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh

I was very offended by the content and direction of a *review* Matthew Kangas wrote about some of my recent work – *Zodiac: Celestial Beasts* – shown last spring at Susan Cummins Gallery, in Mill Valley, California. The problem for me rests not so much in the negative tone of his review [I don't presume to restrict his perception of my work, and I can't believe he wishes me ill] but in the careless manner by which the work was used as a convenient vehicle for his aesthetic agenda. My work served his interests to establish *his* criteria and identity as a critic rather than mine as a goldsmith, and in this sense, I admit to feeling both violated and defensive.

Mr. Kangas' *agenda* was revealed when he directed that ominous diagnostic instrument for interpretation – *the stricter standards of seriousness* – toward this small display – a dozen pieces of jewelry – to examine those issues he felt I had failed to resolve in the style of my work, or neglected to address in its iconography, while deriding [out of context and with obvious relish] some statements I had made about my life as a craftsman for other reviewers writing for other publications, particularly *Ornament* magazine. What could these stricter standards of seriousness *be*? None other, one would suppose, than the ubiquitous arcane and prolix methods of contemporary criticism, officially sanctioned by scholars and pundits, encouraged by grants and symposia, and, on popular and semi-professional levels, practiced to comfort and console those whose perplexing encounters with the visual arts have led them to suspect that some ineffable and elusive concept lurked in those silent images or constructions. *Please, tell us what it means.* In art criticism, the *stricter standards* of seriousness serve to illuminate those dark corridors of the discursive odyssey through the meaning of the work in question, keeping the viewers/readers on [*the right*] course, rewarding them with the illusion of comprehension. It would follow, then, to engage in the correct and meaningful experience of the visual [*fine*] arts, one is wholly dependent upon the guidance provided by the critic who uses the necessary distortions of a literary matrix to explain what one is looking at and why it is [or is not] important. So visual images and objects may easily become *issues* one *reads about*, rather than visual ideas one *expresses* or *experiences.* The application of these stricter standards of seriousness to the crafts and, specifically, jewelry, usually results in displaying a *credo* which exposes the critic's own *conceit.* The self-importance of the latter tends to obscure the basic factors crucial to establishing the nature of the craft image/object while overriding the specific studio experiences and attitudes peculiar to the craftsman. The critic's opinions usually imply the existence of a hierarchy of visual styles and ideologies with [usually] painting and sculpture at the top, and decorative arts at the bottom. The critic's convictions usually affirm the notion that by adjusting the values [if any] of the lower forms [crafts] to those of the more profound forms above [fine arts] marked improvement of the lower forms will occur.

Their levels of sophistication will be forced to rise. However, goldsmiths at their workbenches are quite unlike sculptors in their studios. Why should their work be similar? But Academic Imperialism [*a.k.a. the stricter standards of seriousness*] represents a widely-held viewpoint which contends that a hand-made object is basically *inert*, has no voice of its own, and remains *meaningless* until activated by the sudden imposition of literary inspection which will rescue it from uncritical oblivion and restore it to its proper place in a wider cultural context. Permit me to include, at this point, an excerpt from a recent *Commentary* written by Janet Koplos which was published in *American Ceramics, Volume 11, Number 1, 1993.*

"The big question we should talk about is whether it matters if crafts benefit from emulating art's intellectual structure. I'm going to argue that it doesn't and that lusting after equality with art has been destructive to crafts."

Mr. Kangas' assertion that jewelry is *art* [by which he means *fine art*] is not a *fact* but merely his own personal declaration. He ignores the reality that jewelry [which along with weaponry are the *oldest* products made by human hand] has absolutely *no tradition* as a fine art form. That doesn't mean that master goldsmiths weren't highly respected members of their respective societies, but they were never regarded as *fine artists*, nor pitied because they weren't. It is still difficult to place jewelry within the framework of either the decorative arts or contemporary crafts which in the last few decades have struggled recklessly to attain *fine art* status, having to surrender, in most cases, their very purpose, function and rationality, for a place in the sun. It is sad to admit that there really *are* many [artists, craftsmen, educators, impresarios and critics] who are predisposed to give jewelry the pompous stamp of late twentieth century credentials so that it might pretend to be fine art? At this point, it's probably a non-issue. Since Duchamp's *readymades* of the early 1900's, we have understood that *anything* can be art; since his academic sanctity in the late sixties, we can acknowledge that *anything* with a pin-stem on it can be jewelry. And since photographic imagery has become blurred with visual reality, we are able to regard *any* three dimensional object as pictorial. If jewelry has retained any of its functionality it would be as *body adornment*, and if jewelry is not to be *worn*, and instead must be experienced primarily as the two dimensional results of a photographic image, [or in a museum case as *art*] then it has surely forfeited its distinction as something one wears [with all the mystery that inexplicably binds the wearer with the work, from crowned regents to pierced navels] and has become something entirely [and pathetically] different: miniature sculpture, perhaps. But then, of course, being *diminutive*, any tiny jewelry-object which is not primarily intended as body adornment may, with some justification, be called, – *ulp!* – *cute.* Or is it the style of this reviewer, who not only relies heavily on Tom Wolfe's cute italic-essay style introduced two decades ago, but also glibly reminds the reader about my work that: "*We're not talking Modigliani here*". Nor should we. I agree. I'm a goldsmith; I make jewelry.

The [*thin*] ideas I've succeeded in *masking* through my craft have a solid [if eclectic] basis and long tradition in jewelry from many cultures. Two millennia of *zodiac* iconography supplies a rich archive of anthropomorphic imagery and symbolic associations [*birthstones*, for example] with which this series is firmly connected. Mr. Kangas conveniently avoids this in his review, while he is swift to qualify [or chide] the visual *appearance* of my figurative series. The adjectives which supply much of the language for *the stricter standards of seriousness* are indeed [predictably] serious ones: *pretentious, ingenuous, saccharine*, etc. The words are chosen in a reflexive, self-serving way to enable his reader to make the inference that *he*, the writer, is incapable of being cute. In fact, the reader is intended to regard his performance [as a critic] as exemplary. He is *hip*. He is also, I think, rather tyrannous. Within the confines of Mr. Kangas' arrogant vision, my figurative work "*will be judged like any other figurative work of art or craft: as commentary on the human condition.*" This is a cheap shot. He just doesn't like the look of my work. This "*review*" is about *taste*, not about *ideas*. We're talking *stylistic concerns* here. Hasn't the *human condition* always been at the very core of the various but strikingly similar zodiac [astrological] systems: the symbolic link between self and other; the adjustment intensely complex human events and enormously empty celestial time? Mr. Kangas, I think you missed the point. I think you were blinded by your cumbersome critical apparatus before you ever entered that gallery in Mill Valley.

It's easy to apply the *stricter standards of seriousness* to embarrass a goldsmith whose work resists the coolness of industrial banality, the trendiness of politically correct imagery [recently Mr. Kangas reviewed an exhibition of gay ceramics], or the ironies of assemblage rip-offs.

The *fame* issue is perhaps the most bizarre portion of the "*review*". Because celebrity culture affects the role of the artist [much earlier, Freud had insisted that the artist lusted after fame and beautiful lovers], Mr. Kangas apparently rejects the notion that it's possible *not* to be obsessed with fame, for he took exception to my disavowal of the favored [fifteen-minutes are the temporal dimensions of the Warholian episode] position. Would Mr. Kangas like to be remembered as a *famous* art critic? Perhaps there really *are* large numbers of artists and craftspeople who are spending more time designing their software portfolios than working in their studios, worrying about their place in history, determined to be *important*, neurotic about being forgotten, carefully managing their careers so that no powerful contact remains unpetitioned, no career-enhancing event or advantageous opportunity is unexplored. I let the retail galleries at the commercial interface do this kind of interloping. After all, that's their business. Self-promotion, especially the unctuous variety, is, in my opinion, vulgar. I live very privately, confess to being a recluse, and enjoy working long hours in my remote studio, seeing very few people, the UPS driver and postman serving as major conduits between my environment and the wider cultural sphere. *Metalsmith* magazine is part of that sphere, and I would only hope that in the future your editorial board take greater pains to publish more responsible reviews than the ones Mr. Kangas writes.

— Carolyn Morris Bach

Reviews

LEFT TO RIGHT, BOTTOM

Valerie Mitchell
Pepper Pod Bracelet, 1993
electroformed copper, patina, 6" d.

Gina Chaplain
Blush Brush, 1993
acrylic, sterling silver, camel hair

Mardi-Jo Cohen
Assorted Spoons, 1992–93
sterling silver, Formica, stones, acrylic
6½ x 2 x 1¼"

Robert Farrell
Probe IV, 1990
sterling silver, copper, 15" l.

17th Annual Philadelphia Craft Show

November 4 - 7, 1993
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

by Dorothy Spencer

With the "Year of American Craft" quickly drawing to a close, over twenty-six thousand patrons attended the four-day Philadelphia Craft Show illustrating an ever-growing trend of enthusiastic support – both financially and esthetically – for the craft market.

This annual event attracted over 1,600 applicants from around the country. From that exceptionally large number, only 175 artisans were selected to show their work. And of those exhibiting, nearly one-third were categorized as either jewelers or metalsmiths and half of the prizes awarded went to artisans working in these areas.

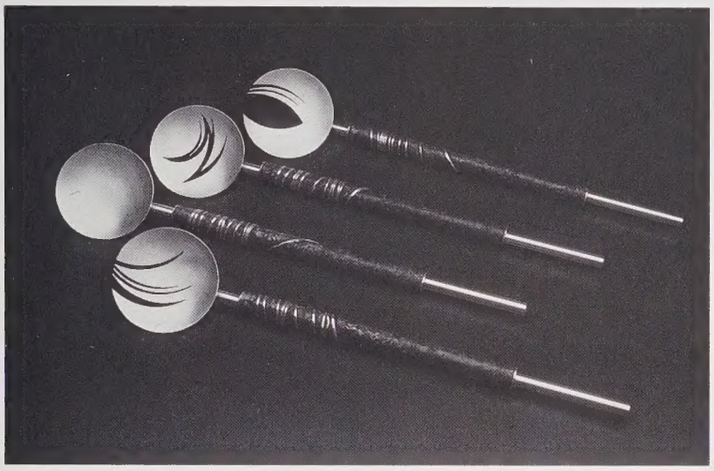
First prize was awarded to Robin Kranitsky and Kim Overstreet for their unique, collaborative, wearable, dioramas. Although the pieces are made from a variety of found objects and constructed in non-precious materials, they are remarkably beautiful, offering thought-provoking miniature tableaus. These tiny scenes seem to be fantastical, magical moments captured and frozen in time, then reduced in scale.

Rick Smith took third place in the show and brought new dimensions to the art of blacksmithing. Using forging, welding, and fabrication the artist creates vessels which are architectural statements. The works' elegant designs are simple, coupling Art Deco inspired borders with strong, almost monolithic-like lines belying a complexity of technique.

Michael and Maureen Banner's serenely elegant, one-of-a kind, silver teapots with their curvilinear lines reminiscent of German Art Nouveau, won the Rolex Prize for Excellence in Metal. Pristine in design and fabrication many of the handsomely finished pieces included cloisonné lids and long, swooping handles.

Jaclyn Davidson won the Touches Prize for excellence in jewelry. Ms. Davidson, whose work is an extraordinary example of *basse-taille* (shallow cut) enameling, makes lost-wax cast and enameled jewelry inspired from myths and fairy tales. Drawn primarily from animal references and motifs found in ancient Greek, Oriental and American Indian sources, her finely detailed bracelets, rings, and pendants are carved in wax; often with the aid of a magnifying glass, then cast in 18k gold. Though most enamel work is usually flat, Davidson's work is quite unusual in that the enamel surfaces of her rings and bracelets curve around the edges, creating a subtly sensual more 3-dimensional form.

In sharp contrast to Davidson's intricately carved pieces are the stark, highly stylized brooches and pins by Abrasha, a new face to the Philadelphia show. These minimally structured works are created from unusual combinations of materials including a computer hard disk with oxidized sterling silver, and 24k gold, a porcupine quill, and a naturally colored diamond, plywood coupled with 18k gold, rubber, sterling silver and 24k gold, or 18k gold, a diamond, and beach pebbles. Strange couplings indeed; but they are very successful in the subtlest of ways. Most of the pins and brooches are basic shapes – a square, a rectangle, or a circle. The size of the flat, 2-dimensional squares are tiny – barely 1½" – all made from the more unconventional materials such as rusted steel, rubber, or plywood. But in the center of each square is a small slit, rimmed and studded in a precious material, offering a minimalist statement of elegance.



Another artisan working in a minimalist vein was Joan Parcher whose bracelets, necklaces, and earrings were superbly crafted pieces based on architecturally simple shapes. The clean lines provided a strong base for the precious materials she incorporated into her pieces: a bracelet made from matte-colored, enamel-on-copper discs hung from an oxidized sterling chain; a pair of earrings, each formed a classical S-curve in oxidized sterling with a tiny 24k vermeil star burst dropping from the tip; a starkly defined necklace composed of a single length of stainless steel cable with one end terminating in a small square, and on the other end a tiny, 23k gold leaf over sterling cube that dropped through the middle of the square to close the loop. Parcher, who is new to the craft exhibition circuit, showed work that revealed both a remarkable purity of design, with an unusual use of materials.

Turning from unadorned minimalism to more earthy designs inspired by nature, two exhibitors of note were Valerie Mitchell and Betty Helen Longhi. Mitchell's work, which is extremely sculptural, conjures up exotic plant forms, roughly executed in copper with colors that enhance the organic nature of her designs. Although the pieces look heavy, Mitchell uses eletroforming to create hollow shapes that are actually rather light. Some of her pieces are treated with mixes of raw chemicals or enamels creating antique-looking surfaces of henna, verdigris, and ocher; others consist of sterling silver covered with 24k gold vermeil. Mitchell's necklaces and bracelets translate the natural, raw beauty found in a seed pod, a small plant form, a twig, or a leaf into a very personal statement.

While Valerie Mitchell's works speak directly of natural forms, colors, and structures, Betty Helen Longhi takes the curvilinear forms found in nature, and translates them loosely into more decorative Art Nouveau-like designs. Using niobium to enhance the flowing lines that feed into one another, her brooches echo movement through space. The combination of die formed, forged, and anodized 18k laminate with the niobium creates a fluidity of motion.

From inspirations found in nature to inspired whimsy there were several exhibitors whose work took a decidedly different spin. Cleverly combining sterling silver with laminated acrylic and, in some instances, adding semi-precious stones such as garnet, amethyst, citrine, and peridot, Gina Chaplain created fantastical spoons, "blush" brushes (makeup brushes), and bottle stoppers. These pieces were expertly fabricated with sterling silver storybook and imaginary characters mounted on their tops, and bands of boldly colored acrylic creating the handles. *Walking Fish* bottle stoppers, cast then fabricated in sterling silver, were designed intricately down to the most minute detail. These pieces were delightfully different, never silly, and they provided playfulness and fantasy, carefully juxtaposed with a touch of elegance.

Equally as whimsical but indebted to the Memphis and Post Modern styles were Mardi-Jo Cohen's eating utensils. Made from combinations of Formica, silver, acrylic, nickel and semi-precious stones, Cohen's pieces were architectural; their boldly colored, patterned handles suggested that a fitting home might be on the top of a table designed by Ettore Sottsass.

Designs for the tabletop are becoming one of the most collectible segments of the crafts market. Many of the exhibitors displayed vessels and other utilitarian objects side-by-side with jewelry and other wearable objects. Even in today's world of fast-paced, take-out dining, and disposable eating implements, there appears to be a trend toward collecting one-of-a-kind and limited edition pieces for the home. Based on the number of tableware and related objects shown and sold at the Philadelphia show it would appear that a great many people seem to be very concerned with how they serve and present their food.

Robert Farrell's simple curvilinear forms, many with hammered inlay on the handles as surface embellishment, reflect this view. Using sterling silver, 18k and 24k gold, copper, shakudo, shibuichi, nickel, and brass for his utensils, he creates artifacts that are equally elegant and functional. Using traditional techniques, primarily hollow construction, Farrell incorporates these various materials for their rich color contrasts. His imagery is simple and relies on the subtle, natural curves of palm fronds and other tropical motifs.

Similarly understated in design were the pewter vessels by Jon Michael Route. These one-of-a-kind and limited-edition pieces (including candlesticks, salt and pepper shakers, and vases) exhibited a solid, sculptural quality with emphatic lines and delicate surface patterns.

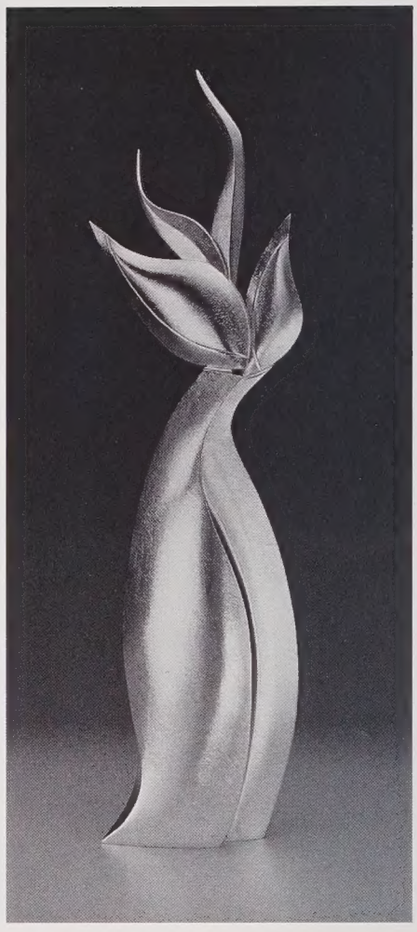
It was impressive to see such a high level of quality. The artists revealed an extraordinary depth of knowledge of the variety of mediums used, and their capabilities were reflected in the many innovative methods of handling and manipulating materials. It is rare when such a broad spectrum of interpretative styles, vocabularies, and provocative directions within the field of metals and jewelry are found in one exhibition.

Dorothy Spencer is a writer who resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Jungle Tree, 1993
sterling silver, 24k foil
10½ x 5½"

Flora (Scent Bottle), 1993
sterling silver, 24k foil
10 x 3 x 3"



Sue Amedolara
A Study of Nature: Ornamental Metalwork and Jewelry

McDonough Museum of Art
Youngstown, Ohio
September 7 - October 9, 1993

by Matthew Hollern

An exhibition may be impressive; yet, not provocative, and such may be the case in shows of ornamental metalwork and jewelry. Ornamental works often evoke keen interest and examination, only to lead to an immediate understanding and acceptance. There is appreciation of the design and its execution, but little more, and while the importance of good design and fabrication are not in question the role of the artist as commentator, interpreter, or pioneer is seldom considered in assessing this type of work . Yet in a highly advanced society, capable of extremely refined mass-production what place does the handmade functional object hold? The frontier continues to be the generation of new designs, new interpretations, and stylization of our world's tired inspirations.

A Study of Nature: Ornamental Metalwork and Jewelry, is an ambitious exhibition that includes 35 works in sterling silver ranging from rings to vessels and small sculptures. Sue Amendolara was inspired by the jungles of Ecuador, South America in the spring of 1993 when she traveled the Amazon river Basin in a dug-out canoe. The majority of the work produced after this experience is an elegant reflection of exotic natural forms from the jungle. Her use of alternative materials such as bone, coral, wood, and fossil brings color, ornament, and life to her jewelry. A series of 3 brooches, *Vannus* (a wing), *Adamas* (adamant or unbreakable), and *Aegyptus* (of Egypt) are among the most compelling. They remain true to their sources with careful attention to the volumes and relationships found in living things. *Adamas* is a vertical spike-form of low volume, inset with bone and karat gold bezel. The head of the form is punctuated by an almond shaped coral cabochon, karat gold, and a beautiful file-cut sterling surface. *Vannus* and *Aegyptus*, similar in form, share rich surfaces and include coral and fossil dinosaur bone. The refinement and symmetry of the brooches lend to their formality. *Jungle Brooch II* composed of several low-volume hollow constructions reflects the varied shapes of tropical plant leaves. Sterling and karat gold are played down with finely cut surfaces and convey the qualities of living tissue and growing forms. The arrangement of leaves remains faithful to natural patterns of growth. *Flora Necklace* is the most enticing piece of jewelry because of its contrasting qualities of elegance and aggression. The necklace is made up of a repeated shape, with a thorn facing out and off the collar, tipped in 24k gold. Among the non-jewelry objects two sets of tea spoons draw upon their jungle sources with great success. The business end of the spoon could well have been inspired by a dug-out canoe while the handles seem to attach and grow like a palm frond from its main stem. The spoons are no more than five inches in length which amplifies the full round volumes of the handles. *Jungle Vessel* and *Jungle Tree* are larger ornamental pieces ambitious in scale and complexity. Yet their construction and execution does not do these designs justice. Where low-volume pillow forms have successfully served in a number of pieces as leaves and stems, the jungle vessel has pillow forms and thin sheet for leaves, not in keeping with all of the other volumes. Thin edges and imperfections in joints detract from the consistent use of volume and fine craftsmanship. Of the larger pieces *Flora*, a scent bottle, is the most faithful to form and volume. A full fruit-like body sprouts voluminous leaves with the completeness and persuasiveness of the brooches and spoons.

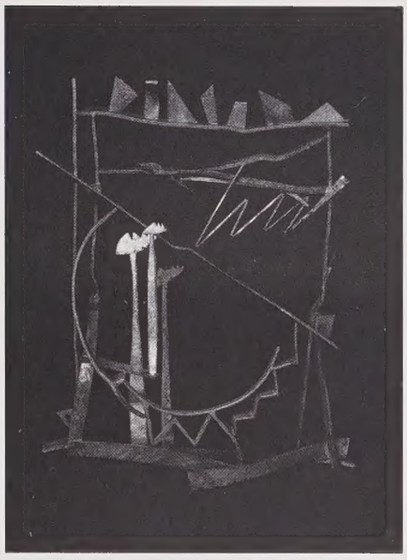
While the exhibition does not politicize or debate the Amazon jungle, the work successfully reflects the beauty and fascination that the artist experienced in the Amazon River basin.

Matthew Hollern is a metalsmith and an assistant professor of metals and jewelry at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Fall Symphony, 1993
24k, patinaed copper, brass
29 x 24 x 6"

Autumn Contemplation, 1993
sterling silver, 24k, patinaed copper
34 x 21 x 12½"



Komelia Hongja Okim

Roberts Gallery
Towson State University
Towson, Maryland
November 7 - November 24, 1993

by J. Susan Isaacs

Initially Komelia Okim trained in fibers in her native Korea, but when she came to this country more than thirty years ago she changed her area of interest to metals. The works on exhibit, large and small sculptures, vessels and boxes, as well as jewelry, reflect the artist's maturity and skill in both its quality of design and impeccable craftsmanship. The jewelry was made from silver and gold, while the sculptures were primarily constructed of copper, with some additions of gold and silver.

It was clear when viewing the totality of the rather large show, including some sixty-two works, that Okim came to sculpture via her accomplishments as a jeweler. Her sculptures retain a sense of decoration and elegance that connect them closely to the jewelry tradition. This link does not detract in any way from their impact and, in fact, exhibiting the two bodies of work together adds an important dimension to our understanding of her oeuvre as the grace of the jewelry informs the refinement of the sculpture.

In the sculpture *Fall Symphony* forms are based on nature and the composition is determined by the elegant massing of linear pieces of copper that have been patinated a rich shade of green, recalling the color of fir trees. These elements, arranged in a graceful organization of open spaces, are balanced against figural elements that are leafed with gold, combining the glowing yellow of the sun with the mysterious dark verdancy of the forest. Another sculpture, *Autumn Contemplation*, also demonstrates a flowing and sophisticated articulation of landscape references. It too is asymmetrical in design with tree-like elements and golden leaves. The open spaces become the sky, while several organically abstracted figures complete the composition.

Such attention to nature and asymmetrical balance is a hallmark of Asian art and recalls Okim's Korean cultural heritage. During the exhibition, most of the gallery was taken up by Okim's work, however, several cases remained filled with antique Asian pieces from the University's permanent collection. Surprisingly, they did not diminish the experience of the main exhibition; on the contrary, they contributed to our awareness of the Asian tradition that informs Okim's art.

The artist's pieces are elegant and stylized. The technical achievement of patinated copper, leafed copper, and Kumboo technique of adhering gold foil to silver evidenced throughout the exhibition, demonstrated expertise combined with lyrical expression and resulted in an extremely compelling show.

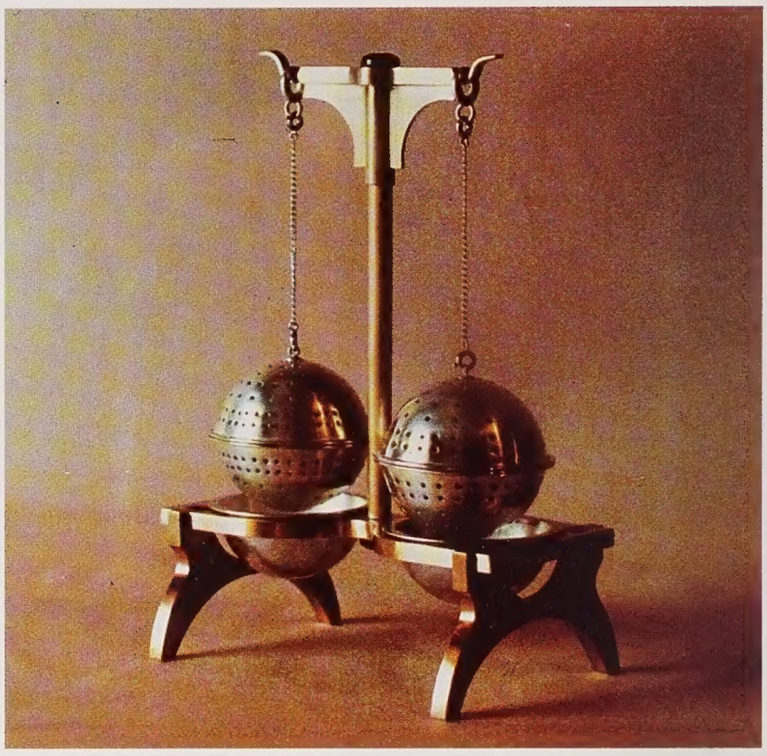
J. Susan Isaacs is an art historian who resides in Wilmington, Delaware.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Tea Infuser Set, 1992
sterling, brass

Euthanasia Set, 1990
copper, brass, silver, rat skull

Tea Pot, 1990
sterling, copper



Curtis LaFollette: Master Metalsmith

The National Ornamental Metal Museum
Memphis, Tennessee
October 10 - December 5, 1993

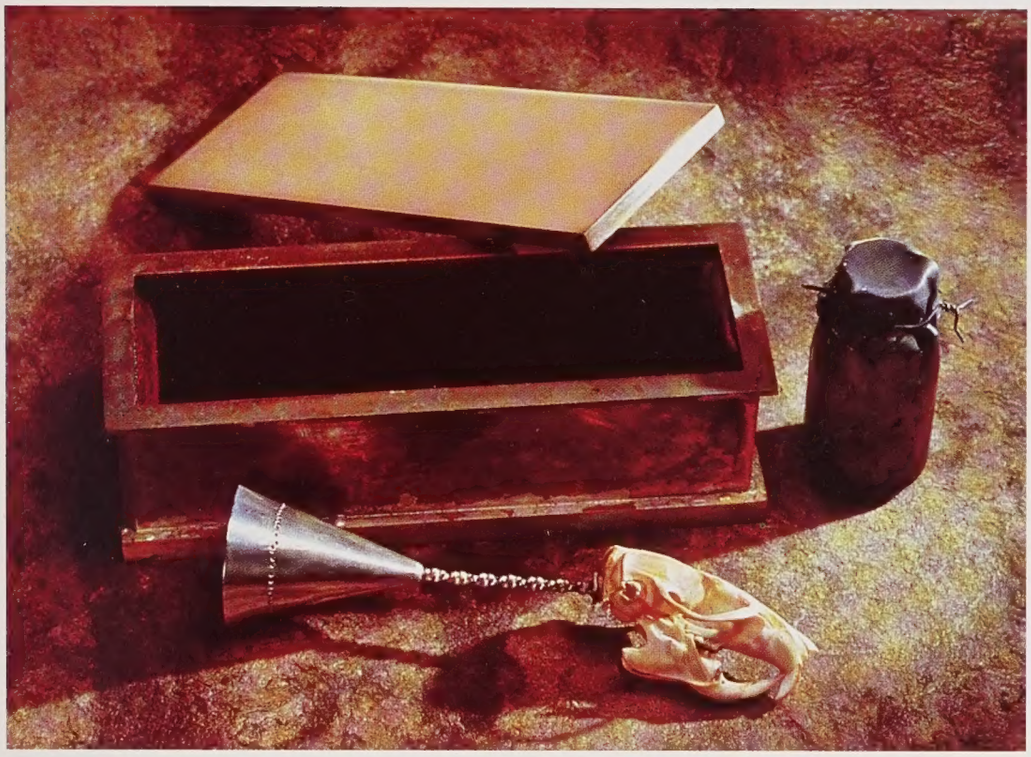
by Jim Buonaccorsi and LeeAnn Mitchell

Each year in conjunction with Repair Days, one of the major fund raising events for the National Ornamental Metal Museum, the museum features the work of the selected guest mastersmith. This year's exhibition highlights the recent work of Curtis LaFollette of Hudson, Massachusetts. The exhibition is a skillful and biting critique of the tradition of metalsmithing, an area of concentration that is often deemed as 'craft' by the art community and never seriously considered in terms of contemporary aesthetics. The work of LaFollette easily dispels this craft/art schism with the subtlety and grace of an artist who has spent the last thirty years developing not only a visual language that works, but a caustic sense of humor.

Director Jim Wallace and his staff deserve the credit for having the foresight to feature the often difficult work of LaFollette. Although the exhibition contains many individual objects, the work has been displayed in an extremely cohesive fashion that provides a unity not often found in exhibitions of this type. One of the most striking features of this exhibition is the multiple levels of address that this body of work investigates. LaFollette leaves virtually no stone unturned in pursuing the issues of both contemporary metalsmithing and art. These issues range from the formal and technical aspects of metal to the address of social and political content.

The work can be divided into several categories that visually bounce the viewer from extreme subtlety to absolute blatancy. The functional/industrial side of LaFollette's work is best embodied in his striking *Trolley Tea Set.* The idea of the traditional tea set is intact, tea pot, cream jug and sugar bowl, with a luscious handling of sterling silver, brass, black plastic and wood. The only catch is that the set can fit only one way onto the industrial mild steel cart, the forced placement issues a fascist invitation to tea. The technical prowess within the set, juxtaposed with the steel cart, which looks like an ordinary warehouse cart further heightens the visual oxymoron. Other works in this industrial/functional side of LaFollette's oeuvre are *Serving Spoons and Tool Bucket* and *Tea Strainer with Base.* In the case of these works, there is an intentional establishment of a dichotomy, the hard contrast between beautiful form and common function, as well as the contrast between precious materials and gritty, common industrial materials.

Another area that LaFollette explores crosses the boundaries of craft, art, and architecture. This series of work addresses the ideas of deconstruction, a field of thinking that first emerged as a philosophical dialogue and was quickly subverted to architecture. Delving into deconstructionist theory could easily become a major treatise in itself, so forgive us here for over simplifying. Deconstruction deals with the idea that by taking something apart and putting it back together in a way that apparently reassigns a sense of utility, one can better understand the potential possibilities of the object and its functions; a three-dimensional reverse psychology if you will. LaFollette investigates these ideas with two pieces entitled *Deconstructed Tea Pot (study).* These works not only deal with the idea of deconstructing form, but also with deconstructing our preconceived ideas of what a teapot is. Both of the deconstructed tea pots are made of heavy copper plate, up to one-quarter inch thick.



The surfaces are marred and marked by the hand of the artist and the act of making, and are devoid of the spit and polish so often associated with the silversmith's tea pot. In these works, the nature of the material exists as primary. In one, the handle is a lawn mower muffler, on the other a field hockey Eagle ball. The combination of fabricated form, found object and implied function move these pieces far into the sculptural realm.

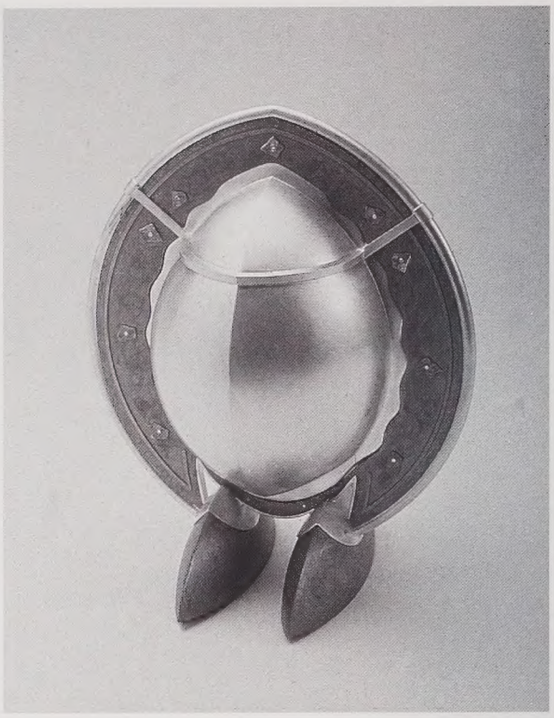
Also included in the exhibition are 11 xerographs. These are a sarcastic compilation of images and text that address a range of social and political issues. These are intentionally temporal images that become indicators of time and place. One image entitled *Second Coming* superimposes the McDonald's logo and golden arches upon a copy of an antique etching of Jesus distributing the loaves and fishes. The text with the image reads "McJesus is coming, 5000 served in a single day". Another xerograph in which the text is the title is *Tests show no progress in a competitive world.* In this image a hand holds a globe of the earth, human silhouettes float aimlessly in space around it while a hooded Klansman looks on. Other xerographs have titles such as *Papal Gino* and *Baby Boom.* These are tough images and potentially offensive to those who lack a sense of humor.

The most important and controversial body of work in the exhibition is LaFollette's *Euthanasia* series. This body of work, like the xerographs, are loaded with black humor. Many find this work difficult because LaFollette objectifies death and the potential ritual associated with it. LaFollette approaches the concept of suicide in a casual, existentialist fashion that mocks not only the medical profession, but virtually all moralists. One of the most unnerving things about these objects is their ability, if so chosen, to be totally functional. Here again, the objects are beautifully fabricated, and the juxtaposition of precious metals against small animal skulls and bones propel these works into the world of applied philosophy. *Euthanasia Cup and Coffin* is an exquisite example of this work. A small rodent skull serves as the handle for a twisted sterling silver stem and cup. The cup which cannot stand upright on its own also comes with its own sterling silver coffin storage case. Another strong piece in this series is actually a grouping of two *Euthanasia* objects and a xerograph existing together as a cohesive wall piece. To the left is a small silver and bone cup, to the right, a small glass poison vile with lead cap, in the center is a concrete poetry xerograph entitled *Resolute.* There are several other *Euthanasia* objects in the exhibition that display the same level of brutal elegance.

Curtis LaFollette: Master Metalsmith is the type of exhibition that both the craft and art communities could use more of. The combination of consummate skill and loaded content is refreshing in this neo-minimalist phase that both communities seem to be embracing. While beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, intellect remains constant in the work of Curtis LaFollette.

Jim Buonaccorsi is a sculptor and Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia, Athens. LeeAnn Mitchell is a sculptor and independent curator and consultant.

Chris Mullins
Three double skinned Small Bowls, 1991
sterling silver



Mark Edgoose
Tea Caddy, 1990
titanium, niobium, sterling silver

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY JOHANNES KUHNEN

Contemporary Australian Hollow Ware

NIU Gallery
Chicago, Illinois
September 10 - October 9, 1993

by Lynn Whitford

It is an uncommon pleasure for people who appreciate the ancient craft of hollow ware to find so much by so many artists as is included in this exhibition. Initiated by Johannes Kuhnen, Lecturer at the Canberra Institute of the Arts, and curated by Daniel McOwan for the Hamilton Art Gallery, *Contemporary Australian Hollow Ware* toured in 1992 and traveled internationally to sites in North America, Asia and Europe.

While any distinctly Australian character in the works was not obvious to this reviewer, the influence of European sources and traditions was clear, not surprising considering that 5 of the artists represented were born in Europe and nearly half included in the exhibition have done at least some studying there.

Most of the work was traditional hollow ware in the sense that it is beautifully and durably crafted and functional. Most (but not all) of the objects appear to be intended to be used, if only for special occasions. Though clearly descended from historical silversmithing the works evidenced a variety of different forms and the use of many materials in addition to silver.

One of the most interesting applications of a modern material is seen in the titanium work by Mark Edgoose. His use of this intractable material in hollow ware is masterful, and his handling of color is both atypical for titanium, and very beautiful, especially in combination with other materials, e.g. fine silver, niobium and stainless steel. A number of the pieces make use of aluminum (e.g., cut and brushed industrial aluminum by Andrew Last, anodized aluminum in combination with silver and black granite by Johannes Kuhnen, and raised and powder coated aluminum by Robert Foster). Robert Baines has combined precious materials (gold and silver) with remnant foil (recycled cans) in his ceremonial objects, and Chris Mullins combines black chrome very beautifully with patinated brass.

There are several visually simple pieces in the show which I found particularly satisfying because they were such boldly generic shapes, but subtly distinctive and exquisitely finished. These included the pierced silver plate, vase, and wine cups by Marian Hosking, the raised silver and black anodized aluminum mesh vessels by Susan Cohn, and the silver double skinned bowls with undulating rims by Chris Mullins.

What the show is *not* is particularly self-conscious about "the art dialogue". It is not art about art. That there is a place in the 20th century for the precious hand-made object (precious in time and craft, if not in material) seems to be taken for granted. These vessels are alive and well, not de-materializing or self destructing, nor commenting on themselves. It is certainly a show which can be enjoyed by people who know nothing about the materials or processes involved.

Most of the artists whose work is in the exhibition are teaching at least part-time in Australia. It will be interesting to follow their work and that of their students in future exhibitions from down-under.

Lynn Whitford is a metalsmith who lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin.

The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life

The Oakland Museum
Oakland California
February 27 - August 15, 1993

Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C.
October 7, 1993 - January 9, 1994

Cincinnati Art Museum
Cincinnati, Ohio
February 18 - April 17, 1994

by Matthew Kangas

In a major museum survey of the California Arts and Crafts movement (1880 – 1920), outgoing Oakland Museum curator of crafts and decorative arts Kenneth R. Trapp has commandeered a wide range of objects which, in turn, are discussed by a group of scholars specializing in landscape architecture, architectural history, historic preservation, material culture, and the decorative arts.

In a region of the U.S. often derided as superficial and dominated by popular culture forms such as the motion picture industry, this exhibition and catalog make a strong case for a high level of artistic and cultural achievement early in this century. True, this achievement was often tied to mystical philosophical systems and the openness to these systems characterizes California today, as then; yet, the great number of works of art, architecture, and decorative arts hat these seekers for new lifestyles and untried moral or metaphysical pathways bought and/or commissioned still merit scrutiny and analysis.

Among these works metals played an important part. Ceramic artist Ernest Batchelder helped Douglas Donaldson make an electrical lamp in 1908. Donaldson set opalescent glass into his pierced-copper shade. In Pasadena, an early center of activity, ex-Gorham chaser Clemens Friedell created a gorgeous 107-piece hollowware dinner service for millionaire Eddie R. Maier. In other works for the new carriage trade, Friedell made elaborately chased pieces like *Trophy Vase*, c. 1915, and *Coffee Service*, c. 1910, in which the design was hammered into the surface with blunt tools. As Leslie Greene Bowman points out in her essay, "The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Southland": "such work could exceed the cost of the silver". Friedell's punchbowl and coffee set won a gold medal at the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego.

Donaldson also won a gold medal, for his repoussé and enamel covered chalice which was later acquired by Harvard University. Both the chalice and a *Tea Caddy* from 1915 of silver crowned by red carnelian stones display his multiple skills as an enamelist, silversmith, and jeweler.

Porter Blanchard brought a more austere New England style to the Southland after apprenticing with his father in Gardner, Massachusetts. This equipped him to make the transition to Art Deco in the ensuing decades in which no ornament at all was used.

Charles Frederick Eaton and his daughter, Elizabeth Eaton Burton, used their considerable fortune to create, commission, and propagate the Arts and Crafts esthetic at his estate, Riso Rivo, in Montecito, near Santa Barbara. Pere Eaton combined "honest Furniture...made by hand" with jewel-encrusted leather-bound books, tooled leather chests, and silver caskets. A patinated repoussé tin *Tea Screen*, c. 1901, includes windowpane oyster shell for the sky above a California landscape. Bizarre but beautiful, his daughter's electrical lamps and hanging shades incorporated coastal seashells and mica into hammered and pierced copper shades.

In his discussion of the Bay Area, Trapp offers a model of historical scholarship and a paradigm of curatorial detective work. The project took nearly seven years of tracking down and authenticating appropriate works. After the Oakland Museum exhibit opened last February, Trapp continued to receive crank and crackpot letters from people living in period homes completely furnished with Arts and Crafts furniture, pottery, metals, and textiles. Like every other originally healthy and progressive movement, California Arts and Crafts has by the 1990s degenerated into a possessive, nostalgic cult. All the more credit, then, to Trapp and the lenders who agreed to share their treasures.

The San Francisco Guild of Arts and Crafts was founded in 1903 by a metalworker, Douglas van Denburgh. The city was already the major manufacturing center in the West and supported a number of craft industries. Paul Elder and Co. was an important outlet for fine goods which included brass work by van Denburgh and Victor Toothaker. Shreve and Co. had already been founded in 1852 and, significantly, was around during both the 1848 – 49 Gold Rush and the 1859 discovery of silver at the Comstock Lode. As a result, particularly beautiful works using both gold and silver were made. *Coffee Server*, c. 1900, used 18k gold-plated brass over a medieval form with ivory straps on the handle to temper the heat from the beverage. *Water Kettle and Stand*, c. 1900, employed hammered silver and ivory to the same effect.

Other silversmiths active in the Bay Area early in the century were Lillian Palmer (who later studied in Vienna) and D'Arcy Gaw of San Jose who had trained at the Art Institute of Chicago. The role of women in the Arts and Crafts movement in California should not be underestimated. Lucia Kleinhans Mathews, for example, was deeply involved with her husband, Arthur, in their Furniture Shop which sold carved and decorated wooden furniture in the Arthurian style. Gaw designed for Dirk van Erp who opened his Copper Shop in San Francisco in 1910. It remained in business until 1977. As one critic wrote early on: "...the output of the shop is staggering in its quantity which is no doubt the reason that the quality of craft and design varies from the mundane to the spectacular."

With over 200 works on view, metals do not dominate *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California* but neither is the period conceivable without their presence. The range from clunky hinges to effete and precious containers suggests both that the claims for simple style were overstated and that the latitude for material treatments was much broader than generally recognized.

With its curious mixture of progressive idealism, political reform, and high-end production, our nation's first modern crafts movement reminds us that similar principles were behind the post-World War II crafts revival which reached an apogee in the 1960s.

The success of the earlier political reforms, coupled with more widespread training systems for artists, and a broader affluence of potential consumers made the West Coast hospitable once again to fine handmade objects, as well as to the 'granola - street-fair' variety. Why California now has so many excellent artists working in craft materials, including metals, is thus partially explained by this thorough watershed exhibition.

Matthew Kangas is an independent art critic and curator in Seattle.

Adornments
(Installation view), 1993
vermeil (24k on sterling),
found lithographic prints,
glass, wood
Photographs by Alan Labb

Julia Barello: Adornments

Graham Gallery
Albuquerque, New Mexico
November 13 - December 18, 1993

by David Staton

Julia Barello gets under your skin.... and into your head.

Barello's *Adornments*, an installation at Albuquerque's Graham Gallery, transformed the downtown gallery into a space of contemplation, connections and conundrums about the human body.

Five turn-of-the-century surgical diagrams were hung from the gallery's ceiling, seemingly floating in soft, golden light above Barello's jewelry. The works mirrored the incisions depicted in the pictures. The sterling silver brooches, bracelets and necklaces, plated in 24k gold, appeared to have been directly lifted from a body; arteries, muscles and capillaries provided surface depth to the contours of the human shape. Texts describing how to wear the jewelry/adornments were displayed atop the pedestals holding the pieces. These instructions shared a completeness and conciseness of language with to-the-point medical texts.

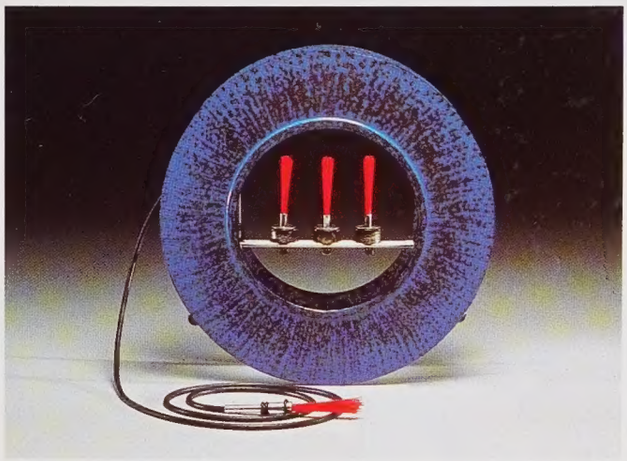
With exacting precision Barello set up a compelling push and pull between the objects of *Adornments* that holds viewers in its gravity. The dynamic of the jewelry (sculptures in miniature,) and the medical texts (exacting works of lithography) generated a swirl of ideas. What is shared between objects that rest on top of our skin and those that lie beneath the dermis? Does the gold-plated adornment hold more aesthetic appeal than the flesh and blood that lie beneath? If beauty is skin deep, why do we go to such incredible lengths to cover it with objects such as those Barello has created?

These finite questions lead to bigger issues concerning the body as object. Everyday folks tend to think of the body as a whole, commonly disregarding the separate and individual wholeness of the organs, muscles, and tissues that form the big picture. But those in medical professions take a different view of the body; for them, it is a system of interrelated parts. *Adornments* sets about to both foreground and unify those two disparate views. By isolating the individual pieces, and showing them in a different context, Barello's work challenges viewers to think of the whole from a new perspective.

Adornments also worked from a purely physical standpoint. The surgical diagrams demonstrated what lay beneath the surface – like those nifty color separations of animals you find in encyclopedias – but you can't touch and feel the illustrations. The jewelry, on the other hand, provides that visceral contact, whether it's held or worn. And *Adornments* offered an uncommon reminder of the intricate interior beauties of the ultimate machine – the body.

What's best in this intriguing installation is Barello's response to questions about the primacy of the image. Where did the object or image come from? That is a question artists are continually exploring. *Adornments* suggested that the answer comes from within and is lurking just beneath the surface. The inspiration, after all, can be ourselves.

David Staton is a freelance writer living in Corrales, New Mexico.



Gina Westergard
The Point of Balance: Pendants and Sculptural Displays

Grossmont College-Hyde Gallery
San Diego, California
October 25 - November 19, 1993

by Carolyn Springer

LEFT TO RIGHT

Aladdin Pendant (Pendant with Stand), 1992
sterling silver, pewter,
monofilament, neoprene, paint, brass, 5½ x 12"

Rock and Slide (Pendant with Stand), 1992
sterling silver, brass, neoprene,
monofilament, paint, magnets, 7"dia. x 2"

The bold yet elegant work shown at the Hyde Gallery in *The Point of Balance*, reveals a desire to balance the refined in design with the enigmatic in function. Juxtaposing silver to neoprene rubber, gold to goat hair, and semiprecious stones to plastic, Gina Westergard creates pendants and their sculptural stands that visually excite and puzzle the viewer.

The pieces all explore the potential of jewelry making, yet it is the way in which the pendants interact with the stands that create the often mysterious-looking objects. Some are reminiscent of toys: the top, wheel-o, yo-yo, and gyroscope, while others appear to be sophisticated instruments for science or medicine. It is this invented gadgetry that captures the viewer's interest and invites playful participation with the pieces.

Within *Aladdin's Pendant* and *Saucer Top*, Westergard combines pewter, magnets, monofilament, neoprene rubber, and silver to create a refined symphony between traditional hollow ware metalsmithing and unexpected mixed media and machine parts. Magnets are used in the piece *Rock and Slide* and as the sculpture rocks back and forth the magnets slide within it. The magnets display a playful, quirky character but eventually settle back to a center point when the stand becomes still. Westergard's interest in kinetics and use of magnets in the work reveals a deeper search for content and explores the idea of constant balance. Toying around with function, Westergard enjoys the mental exercise that is involved as she resolves the works.

The spherical forms in the pieces suggest the artist's interest in the tradition of metalsmithing and her training at San Diego State University and Indiana University, respectively. The repetition of the sphere, egg, or circle as a connecting theme, is a constant part of her design sensibility and helps her to achieve a result in which nothing is extraneous. Achieving universality, the sphere is the primordial form containing the possibilities of all other forms through motion. It is a personal symbol for the artist representing the cyclic movement of renewal in life.

Westergard is interested in creating jewelry that radiates life because of the relationship it has with the human body. A wearer's touch allows for a connection and intimacy not possible in other art forms. The pendants, when worn, hover above one of the seven chakras; the spiritual and psychic energy centers in a being. When the wearer is moving, the pendant gently bounces from the chakra point and serves to remind the wearer of being centered and balanced.

Most of the necklaces are very minimal and made up of a single strand of neoprene or a solitary chain and a center pendant design. The combination of pendants and sculptural stands create mysterious objects, whose function is so enigmatic, that the viewer often needs to be assisted in order to locate the necklaces. *Rocking Vertebra*, which is constructed of many linear, golden hour glass-shaped links, refers to a suspended spinal column and displays the idea of equilibrium between the chain and stand. In this age of holistic healing and achieving balance through yoga and meditational activities, this piece is a wearable reminder of the personal work that one does to achieve wholeness. Westergard states, "The common thread in my work is balance, whether it be in a physical sense of steadiness, a philosophical approach to balance in one's life style, or an aesthetic notion of symmetry between materials and between design and function."

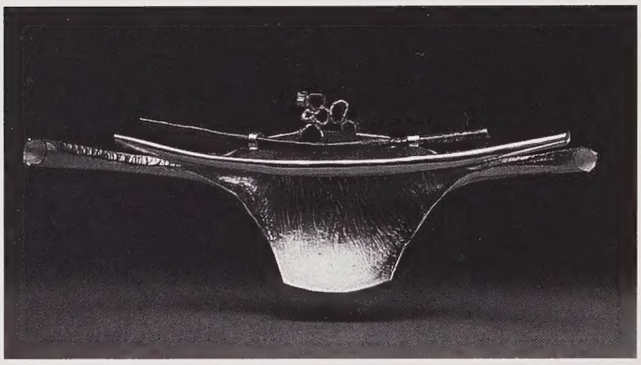
Her work is at its most powerful in its presentation as a mysterious object with movable and removable parts. It is then spiked with intrigue, mystery and whimsy and is allowed to be sculpture, a scientific instrument, a vertebra, or even a refined toy.

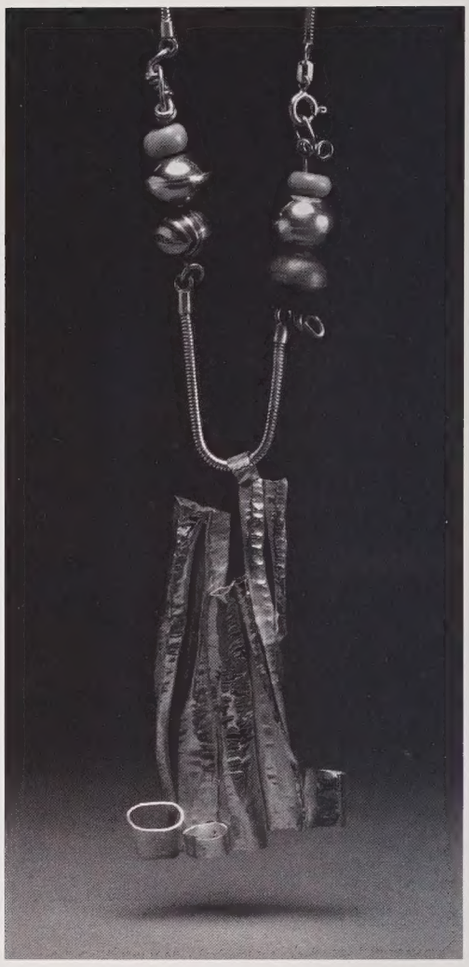
Carolyn Springer lives and works in San Diego, California.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Brooch,
Horseshoe Canyon Variation, 1993
sterling silver,
18k gold, shakudo, shibuichi
1.5 x 3.5"

Pendant,
Betatakin Variation 1, 1993
sterling silver, 18k gold,
shakudo, shibuichi, glass
3.5 x 1"





Canyons
Recent work in Metal
by Tim Lloyd

Carleton Art Gallery, Carleton College
Northfield, Minnesota
October 14 - November 15, 1993

by Karen Searle

Landscapes are a primary inspiration to metalsmith Tim Lloyd. Whether in the environs of Lake Superior or visiting the Southwest, he soaks in the colors, contours, and textures of geological formations and the natural history, distilling and reinterpreting them through silver and gold into exquisite sculptural brooches and necklaces. Most recently he has created a group of shrine-like pieces evoking the colors and textures of the New Mexico landscape where the artist spent several months last year. He was inspired by particular canyon walls and rock formations, ancient cave pictographs, and the artists who made them.

The Canyon Series is more fluid, less contained than Lloyd's earlier landscape works based on mesas and on Lake Superior; the metal forms are thin and embellished with slender rods and tubes. Lloyd makes sparing and effective use of the Japanese alloys shakudo and shibuichi. Traditionally used in Japan for making spiritual objects, touches of these unusual and delicately-colored metals enhance the reverential quality of the pieces. Their matte surface contrasts with the polished silver or gold of the basic forms.

The collaged brooches are small silver and gold shrines to sacred places. Curved forms with tapered ends, and textured with irregular rock-like surfaces, are the basic elements used in pieces such as *Barrier Canyon Variation.* Restrained touches of color from silver-gray to blue-green are brought in with the Japanese alloys, and suggest offerings in the shrines. Small details added from sliced silver tubes are further suggestions of rock formations. Many of the parts are bundled together with wire. Lloyd's reverent use of materials and patinas evokes a sense of age and mystery.

Based on a view from the bottom of Horseshoe canyon, a strong horizontal line is present in many of the canyon pieces. The forms are reticulated for a naturally occurring texture, and several are incised or inlaid with gold, simulating pictographs and ancient message fragments.

The *Betatakin* necklace series and another group of brooches are constructed of groupings of tubes fused together and partially opened at the ends or in the center. Their intentional asymmetry conveys a sense of playfulness. Color is added with a few carefully selected glass beads and hand-formed metal beads fabricated from the shakudo and shibuichi. This combination of bright and muted colors is a delightful complement to the silver forms and chains.

Karen Searle is writer who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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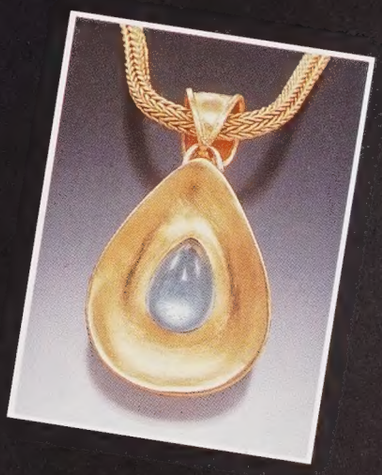

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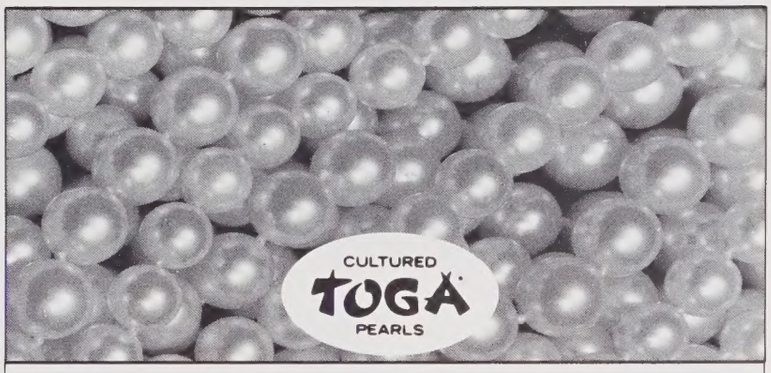

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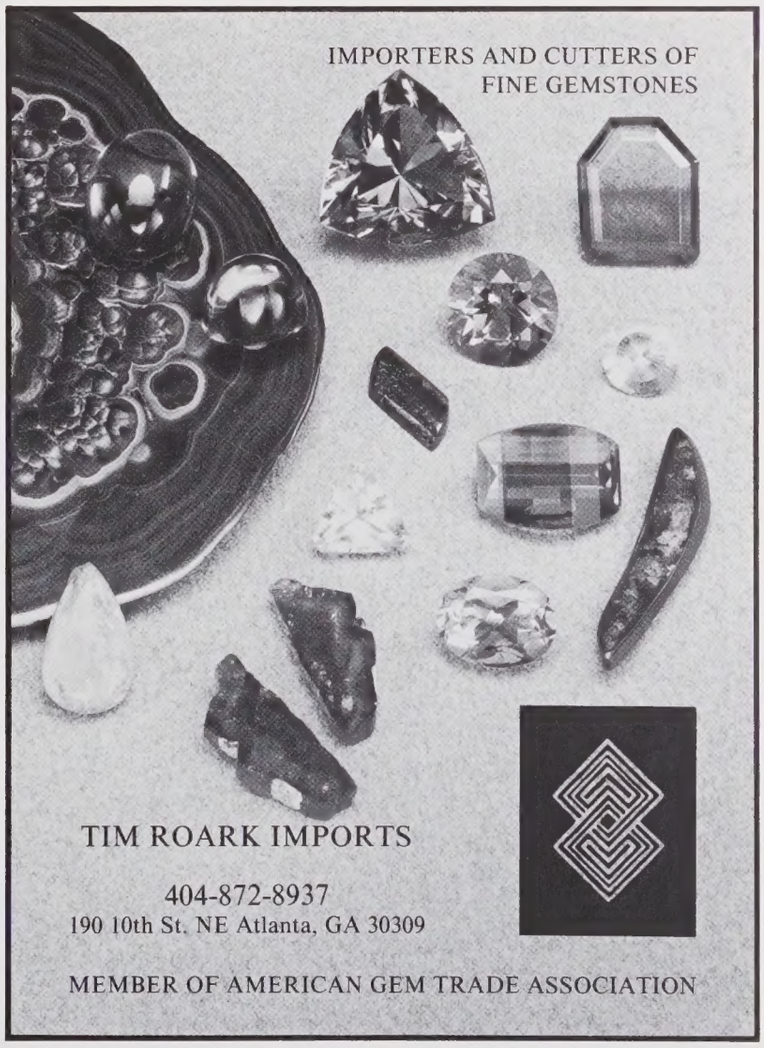

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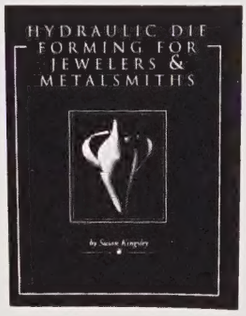

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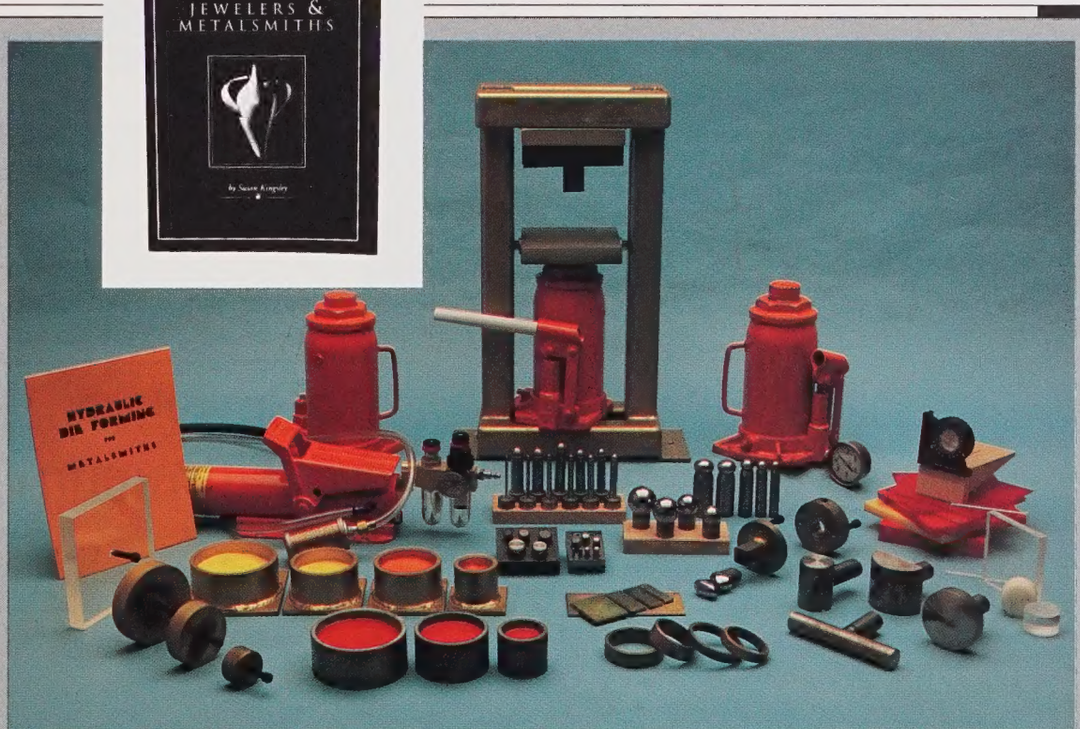

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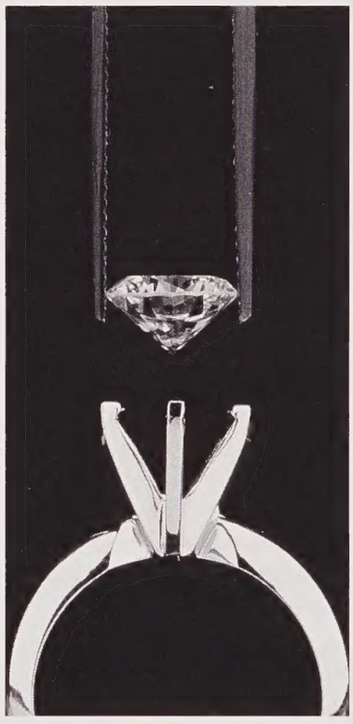

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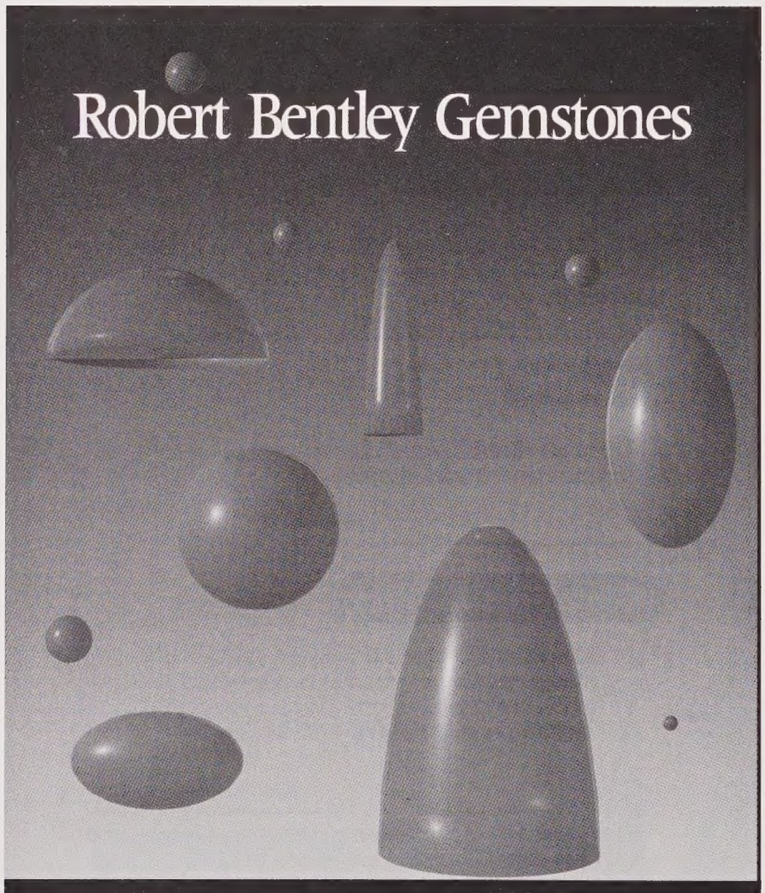

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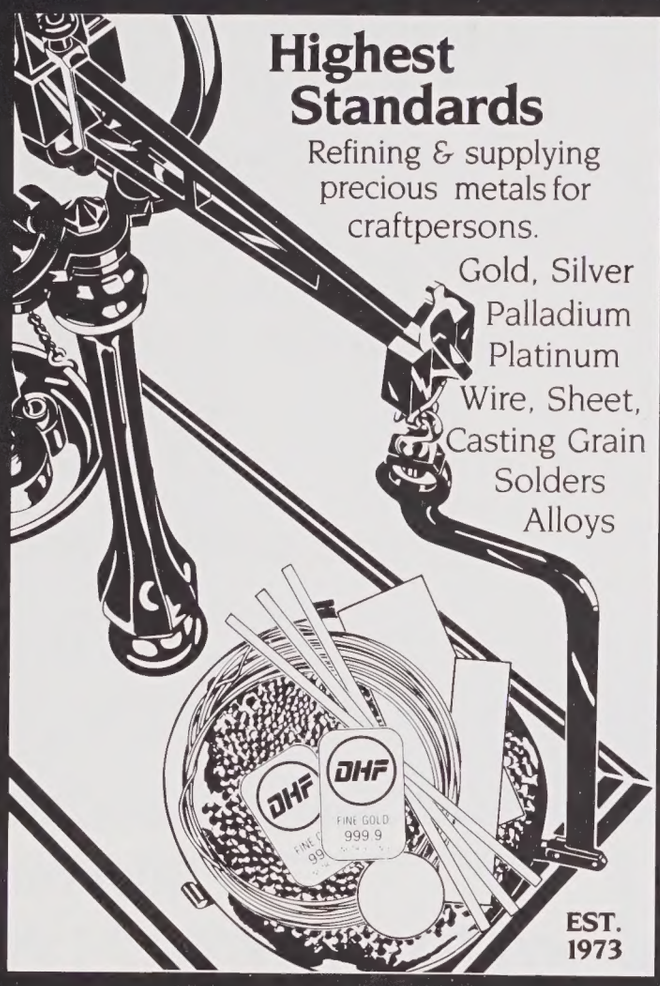

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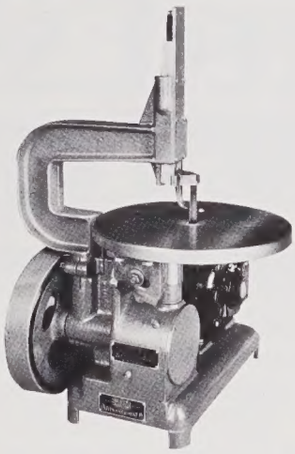

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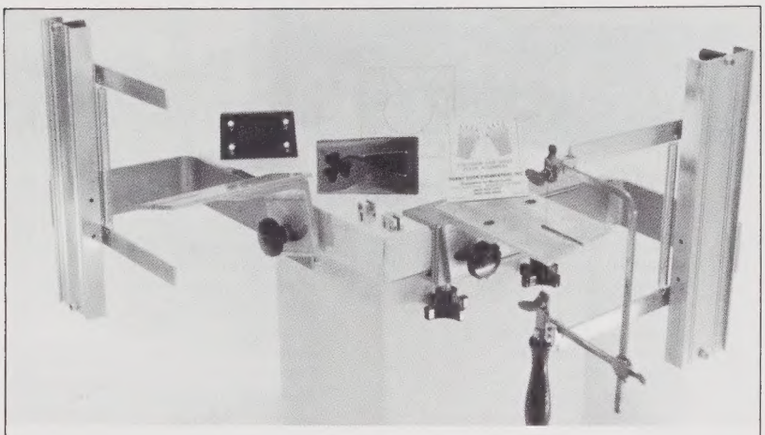

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QUAKE

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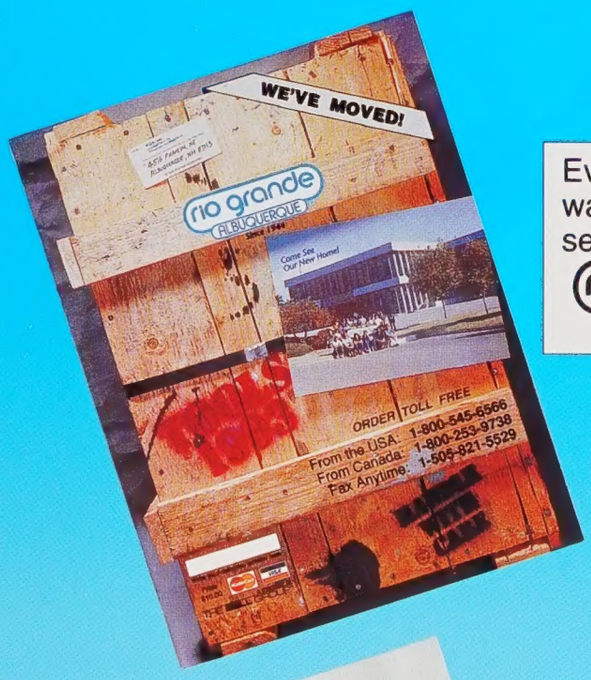

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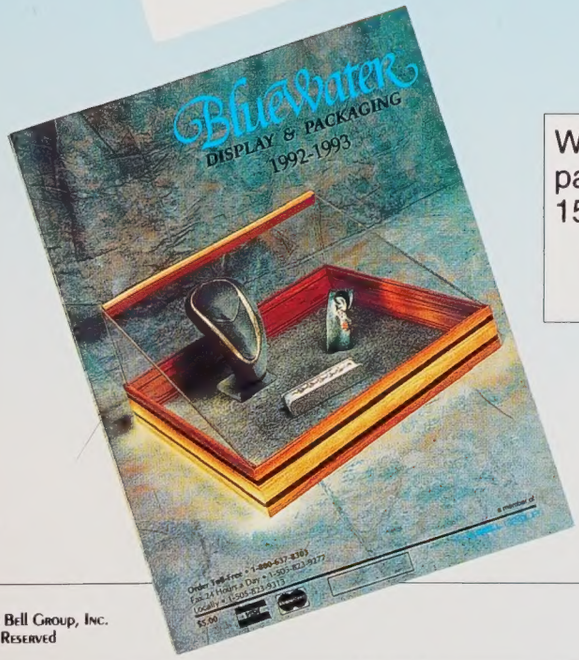

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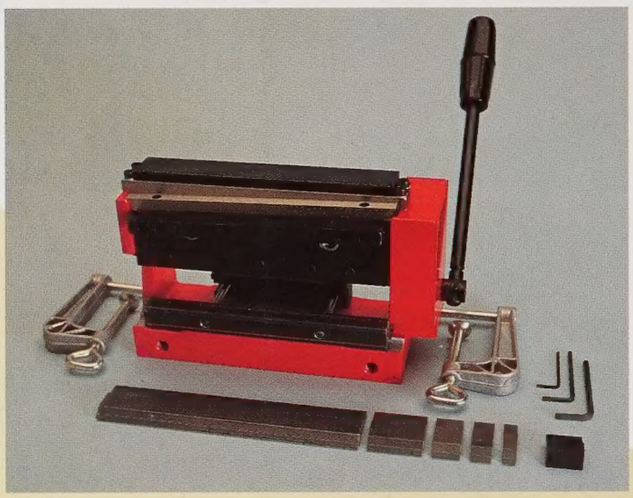

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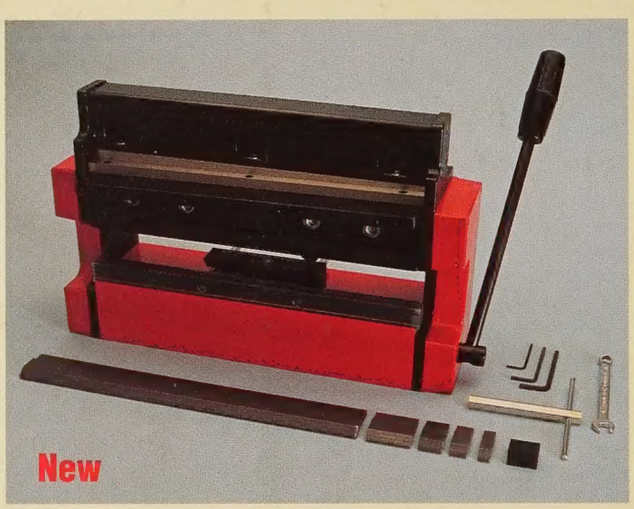

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